

Mrs. Taylor's
Retrospection.

1821



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RETROSPECTION

pounds ten! Somebody must have got at the drawers! Do give another look, however." *

And so Kate commenced her search; but the cabinet was so intricate in its construction, that, till this moment, one drawer had remained undiscovered by its present possessors.

" My stars!" exclaimed she, " what, in the name of wonder, is here? Such a sight of papers, all sealed up so curious! Why, did you put these here, Jem?"

" Not I," said he. " I'll lay a wager they belonged to old Mrs. What-d'ye-call-'em, at Ashen Hall there; and have lain here ever since."

Just at this moment entered Mr. Drummond, the parish minister; and Kate, more eager for his opinion respecting the prize they had found, than for his spiritual services to her dying husband, put them into his hand.

" Jem, sir, is too ill to look at them,

said she ; “ and I am no scholar. Will you be so good as to see what they are, and whether they are *worth any thing?*”

“ •They are honestly mine, be they what they may,” exclaimed the old man ; for my master bought those very drawers at Ashen Hall ; and when he went away, he said I might have them : and nothing’s freer than a gift.”

Mr. Drummond glanced his eye over the papers, and after performing his professional duty, put them into his pocket ; and sped him home to the parsonage, where, for several evenings, the attention of the family was engaged by listening to the following narrative.

CHAPTER I.

THE changing scenes of life are over ; — my sun is declining, — soon it will cease to illumine the hills and vales which have been traversed by my weary steps. I will take a last survey ; and, by the aid of its departing rays, endeavour to retrace all my wanderings. Ah ! its soft beams still gild the safe and straight road which lay before me ! Now I see it distinctly ; and I can perceive, too, the crooked paths and labyrinths into which I deviated. There I was bewildered, — and thence an unseen hand brought me, at length, as a strayed sheep into the fold.

Though parthage, noble or obscure, may entail honour or the reverse on an individual, I am happily exempted from either extreme ; having been born in that intermediate class of society generally

esteemed the most favourable to virtue and to happiness. My father was a solicitor in a populous town, and derived considerable emolument from his profession. My acquaintance with him, during my earlier years, was certainly not very familiar; for his exclusive application to business was incompatible with domestic habits. His father having dissipated a moderate fortune in desultory pursuits, and thereby lost some favourable opportunities of providing for his family, determined him to an opposite line of conduct. Keeping one object constantly in view, he exerted all his energies to repair the injury his fortunes had sustained; and he suffered few matters, either within doors or without, to interrupt his favourite concerns.

Of my mother, during this early period of my life, my recollections are of a more endearing description. Her natural temper, frank, ardent, and affectionate, had been chastened by protracted

bodily afflictions. I had heard it distantly hinted, that my father was not the object of her choice, but that she was forced into the connexion by her family: on this subject, however, she herself was silent. Yet although, in her general deportment, there might be a something indicative of a mind not entirely at ease, there was nothing in her conduct, as a wife, from which such a circumstance could have been inferred; but the degree in which she was impeded by sickness, in the discharge of those domestic duties for which she was, in other respects, so eminently qualified, preyed upon her spirits, and aggravated her malady.

Surely, there is no female who would express surprise at this statement,—none who, having assumed so important a station as that of the mistress of a family, would feel the performance of her various duties more burdensome than the unavoidable suspension of them. “A good

wife is from the Lord ;" but she only merits that honourable title, who acquits herself with alacrity and zeal.

I had a brother too,—yes, I had a brother ;—and we together engrossed all our mother's solicitude. Her anxious wish to recover health, for our sakes, aggravated every pain, and rendered more formidable every unpropitious symptom of her disorder. Richard was two years older than myself ; and he inherited all his mother's engaging qualities. The turbulence of the boy was so blended with genuine good-nature and the kindest affections of the heart, that they more frequently cheered and enlivened his invalid parent, than disturbed or oppressed her.

When his schooling was completed, he was taken into his father's office, with the view of being brought up to the same profession ; but all who knew him thought, and his mother feared, that he would never submit to the restraints it imposed. My father, however, be-

trayed no fears on the subject; for he possessed the rare quality of rendering every individual under his command, of whatever rank, age, temper, or habit, perfectly conformable to the routine of business. It was a minor consideration to him, what they were *out* of the office; *in it*, they were so many implements of his trade, which he adapted to their various uses, almost with as much ease, and as little ceremony, as the mechanic does his tools. Certain services were to be performed, and performed they were, by the simple means of keeping his machinery in order. So little did he know of insubordination, that whenever he heard people complain of being unable to manage their servants and assistants, he constantly silenced them by this laconic question, "Why not?"

Richard was not well disposed to endure this kind of discipline; although, while under it, he was as unavoidably passive as the rest of the machinery of

which he formed a part; but he panted for liberty, and resolved to make a bold effort to obtain it, at all hazards. My mother was inconsolable when he first announced his determination to quit the paternal roof, knowing that when no longer under her watchful eye, he would be exposed to a thousand temptations.

For some time, his filial affection and tenderness prevented him from developing the whole of his scheme; but, what was her grief and dismay, when she discovered his intention of going abroad! While the invalid mother foreboded a final separation from this darling son, and employed every argument that maternal feeling could suggest to dissuade him from the measure, he accosted her in the most soothing strains, expressive of the tenderest affection and most poignant distress; but yet struggling with an ardent desire for the attainment of his object: their mutual sufferings were aggravated by the dread of

my father's resentment, who could never tamely endure to be thwarted in his plans.

But it so happened, that these apprehensions were totally groundless. Richard introduced the subject with a great deal of circumlocution; but when his father perceived his drift, he cut him short, brought matters to a point, and despatched the business with promptness and decision; by saying, that if any other situation or profession pleased him better, as it made no material difference to him, he should not be at the trouble of opposing it; and he wished him to consider himself perfectly at liberty to follow his own inclinations.

Notwithstanding my mother's dread of a disagreement between the father and the son, she could not now help regretting the removal of one obstacle to this fatal step, by her husband's ready acquiescence. No other impediment occurring, measures were taken to procure

an appointment in the East India Company's service, and too soon the fatal hour of separation arrived ; at this moment it is fresh in my recollection, and I may number it among the bitterest of my life.

My mother's impaired constitution now received a shock, which left little hope of her long surviving : but my father evidently thought it quite unnecessary to die because a son was gone abroad, nor did he appear apprehensive of such a result in the case of his wife. He however spared no expense, and withheld no indulgence, which her precarious circumstances seemed to require, provided that they did not demand his personal attention, obtrude into his office, or interfere with his busy concerns.

But it is time to say something of myself. I was just fifteen at the time of my brother's departure for India : the world called me handsome, and I was disposed to believe it : but, if certain

grave people should be more inquisitive respecting my mental qualities than my personal attractions, let them know that my natural temper was most sweet, and soft, and engaging, and humble, and teachable, *when my will was not opposed*, my opinions controverted, my convenience assailed, or my plans interrupted : but then I experienced an indefinite sensation, accompanied by a transitory flush in the cheeks, a sudden palpitation, and a quickness of utterance not usual in more tranquil moments. Now, as the atmosphere of my parents' house seemed rather to aggravate this malady, I was induced to take every possible method to escape from it, and contrived, by what my father termed *gadding*, to ward off the frequency of the paroxysms : in so doing I acquired a reputation abroad, which I could not maintain at home,—that of being a very good-tempered girl.

I was a wit, too ; for I could write poetry, and burlesque my friends, to the

great amusement of some, and the inward chagrin of others: indeed, so high was my reputation, that a foolish egotism rendered some individuals even ambitious to be the objects of my satire; this, however, stimulated my Muse to such vagaries, as in my sober moments I had reason to suspect did not eventually operate to my advantage: and certainly by being so constantly employed by my friends, to celebrate the most trivial occurrences that befel them, I found business accumulate so rapidly on my hands, as to leave me little leisure or relish for more important avocations.

Now it unfortunately happened, that neither was my father a poet, nor my mother a poetess: the Muses had not instilled one particle of enthusiasm into their composition: it was reserved for their more-favoured daughter to enjoy the smiles of the sister nine, and participate in all the distinguishing honours of their partiality. Of course, my parents

gradually sunk in my estimation into beings of an inferior order; not that my filial affection, although so forcibly assailed, could ever be extinguished: for my mother, especially, I felt a tenderness which eventually remained proof against every unpropitious circumstance: but, not sufficiently sensible of the full import of the fifth commandment, if not essentially deficient in natural affection, I certainly did not give my parents the honour due to them. My conscience frequently upbraided me with suffering this evil disposition to influence my behaviour, though, after every aggression, I made secret promises of amendment, and as repeatedly broke them.

But, of our family circle, one individual remains to be described. *Peter Patterson*, articled to my father, was somewhat older than my brother Richard: his connexions were respectable, and his expectations promising: nor was he insensible to these accidental advantages.

Empty, pert, vain, and conceited, to me he became an insufferable nuisance, especially as I found both reserve and neglect equally ineffectual for keeping him at a respectful distance. His fair complexion, florid cheeks, and oval face, might have fascinated some, but they were my aversion ; and I believe, that the constant obtrusion of this object of extreme dislike upon my notice, tended to augment the natural irritability of my temper, as well as to form some unamiable habits, which, for a long time, seemed too inveterate to yield to the chastisements with which I was exercised.

My dislike gradually degenerated into the most confirmed malice, (my conscience does not allow me to employ a milder epithet) ; scarcely a day elapsed in which I was not contriving, either by word or deed, to vent these acrimonious feelings by insulting or tormenting this habitual intruder on my quiet ; espe-

cially, I had recourse to my pen, ransacking my imagination for the purpose of rendering him ridiculous ; and I so far succeeded, that his name was rarely mentioned, without some mischievous couplet of mine being attached to it. But I might have let him alone ; for he was fully competent to the task of rendering himself ridiculous, without the aid of my wit, or my interference.

How dangerous is the indulgence of malevolent feelings ! always more destructive to the peace of the bosom which fosters them, than to the welfare of the individual against whom they are directed. A worm at the root of all mental excellence, of all benevolent propensities, they extend their baneful influence far and wide, even to those who are not the immediate object of them. It is a malady which yields to few remedies, but those which are mixed in the bitter cup of affliction ; and some have only found a cure by wringing it out to the very dregs.

I had reason to believe, that this dislike in the early stage of it, was not mutual; but that Peter Patterson was so far captivated by my person, as to harbour a sort of attachment, if any sentiment in a bosom like his, could deserve the name: but though he never advanced so far as to make an open declaration of love, the unequivocal symptoms of this sentiment increased my abhorrence, and had the most injurious effects on my temper. My poor mother frequently had her full share of my ill-humour, though it was especially at this period that she needed a friend and a comforter. I am now convinced, that she longed to find that friend in me: it would have mitigated her sorrows, could she have conversed frequently and freely on that interesting subject, her absent son; but at this unhappy period, I was in no mood for soothing the sorrows of a mother: besides, I harboured the mistaken notion, that to dwell at all on the subject would only increase her melan-

choly ; as if she could possibly forget what was preying on her vitals, and preying more intensely for want of some friendly bosom on which to repose. • •

My mother was not the only sufferer by this ill-timed and mistaken reserve ; for at this very juncture, I was myself pining for the society of my dear brother, as a protection from the impertinences of my daily tormentor ; and the contrast which I continually made in imagination between the two characters, aggravated my regret ; but I sullenly brooded over these disquietudes, instead of cherishing that confidence and sympathy, which, but for my perverse and perverted feelings, would have proved a mutual benefit.

“ I was all a civil war within,
And, like a vessel steering in a storm,
Required more hands than one to keep me upright.”

CHAPTER II.

IN the midst of this perturbation of mind, I was seized with a dangerous illness, and for many weeks my life hung in suspense. My mother, regardless of her own infirmities, watched over my bed with unremitting tenderness and solicitude;—no peevish or impatient expression of her's ever assailed me, although she had to encounter both, from the natural irritability of my temper, aggravated by bodily suffering. At length a sound constitution triumphed over the disease, and the health of my tender parent, instead of appearing exhausted by incessant fatigue and anxiety, seemed to experience a temporary revival from the joy produced by my recovery.

It was while the marks of this recent indisposition were still visible on my wan features, that, during one of our morning

rides, we alighted at a small farm-house, occupied by a person for whom my father had transacted business. Its situation was retired, but rural and agreeable; and its interior exhibited all the marks of neatness and good management. We experienced so cordial a reception, and the people, though plain in their style and manners, appeared so amiable and prepossessing, that we occasionally repeated our visit. Mrs. Thoroughgood, observing my sickly appearance, kindly invited me to spend a few days at the farm for the benefit of the air; if, as she added, I could put up with their homely accommodations. This invitation was repeated so cordially, that it overcame our scruples, and we felt inclined to repair the damage done to my blooming cheeks, by trying the salubrious air at Mr. Thoroughgood's farm.

Although I had so great an idea of my own importance, as to conceive that the honour I conferred by my presence

would amply repay all the hospitality of my hosts, I affected to feel very considerably for the trouble a personage of my consequence must occasion to such a plain family. I had settled it in my own mind, that during my visit the whole household would be decked in their holiday clothes, that the children would occasionally be admitted into my presence, and stand in a row with their hands before them, to see and to be seen: in fact, that the ordinary business of the house would be suspended, and the period of my visit observed as a general holiday throughout the family.

No such things happened.

On the contrary, when, with a consequential air, I addressed my kind hostess by saying, "Now, I beg, Mrs. Thorough-good, that you will make no kind of difference on my account;" her look and manner plainly indicated that this caution was superfluous: for aught I could perceive, nearly every thing went on in

its usual course, exhibiting the same air of comfort, order, and perfect neatness, as when we made an unexpected ~~call~~. The fare was certainly plain; but it was well cooked, and decently served, and I soon acquired a better appetite for these homely repasts, than I had usually experienced for the more costly viands of my father's table. . . .

For one novel custom, however, I was completely unprepared---before we began supper, on the farmer's striking the floor with his large oaken stick, the maid and a ploughboy---actually a *ploughboy*! appeared in the room, and, without any ceremony, seated themselves in *my* presence! Such a thing I had never witnessed in my life. Then Mr. Thoroughgood read a chapter in the Bible, and prayed *without a book*! I was certain it was not repeated by rote, because, among other strange things which I had been unaccustomed to hear, he prayed for a blessing on my visit, and for my com-

plete restoration to health. I began now to suspect what sort of people I was amongst; however, having discerned nothing yet that I could blame, I resolved, for the present, to suspend my opinion.

• Whether the same ceremony was repeated in the morning I am not competent to affirm; because the family dispersed about their respective avocations long before I made my appearance: but there was always found a little table, neatly set out, ready for my breakfast—the only instance in which it could be discerned that I occasioned any unusual trouble.

“ You are very early risers, Mr. Thoroughgood,” said I.

“ It is a rule at our house, Miss,” said he, “ to earn our breakfast before we eat it.”

“ And I do think,” added his wife, “ that if Miss Burrows would take a turn in the fields before her’s, she would soon get a better appetite, for she eats nothing—just nothing at all.”

“ Shall I call you to-morrow morning, ma’am ?” said little Fanny, who stood by.

“ Thank you, my dear, do,” said I— for I could not decently say “ No.” • •

And so, the next morning, came a gentle tap at my chamber-door, with “ It’s six o’clock, ma’am.”

Six o’clock ! thought I, that is early ; however, after a little delay and reluctance, I summoned courage to rise, though I felt very tremulous and strange, and had walked a full quarter of an hour before I could dismiss the apprehension of sustaining a material injury by this unseasonable exposure to the morning air : but my fears subsided as I quickened my pace, and little Fanny, who was my companion, contributed in a great degree to dissipate them by her cheerful and artless chat.

“ Now, ma’am, I’ll show you such a pretty green lane ! This is our way to school — there — that is the school with the white paling, and there is our house

just over yonder gate ; don't you see the chimney and the poplars ? They're in our garden ! That is our house ; now we'll go another way across the fields, and we shall be home presently."

I was tired when we got home, and began to fear I should sustain as much injury from the heat, as I had apprehended from the cold : but I thought the bread unusually sweet that morning, and, before I quitted the breakfast table, such a felicitous sensation diffused itself over me, and I felt in such perfect charity with all mankind, that I verily believe, had Peter Patterson himself accosted me at the moment, I should have vouchsafed him a civil answer !

The tap at my chamber-door, repeated every morning, was answered with increasing good humour ; not that I can boast of the permanence of these tranquil feelings during the rest of the day : some diseases may be cured by early rising alone, without the aid of medicine, and

others might be mitigated by it; but I am not sure that it has ever been found a specific for pride, or obstinacy, or self-will; — applications widely different in their nature and operation, are necessary for such inveterate maladies; and for me some of these more powerful means of cure were yet in reserve.

The superiority on which I so much prided myself, authorised me, as I imagined, to dictate to my kind hostess on subjects of all kinds, even those respecting which I was totally ignorant; and I not unfrequently exposed my ignorance in a way, that, on maturer reflection, made me feel thoroughly ashamed. "You should do this," and "why don't you do that?" was, as I conceived at the time, rendering her an essential service: but, although my officious interference was borne with the utmost placidity and good humour, I had the mortification to perceive that things went on just the same as before. The woman appeared to me

to be quite incapable of receiving new ideas. One day, having endeavoured to enforce the absolute necessity of Fanny's having a better hat — she calmly replied, “ But we cannot afford it.”

“ O yes, you ^{can},” said I.

“ We are the best judges of that, I think,” said the father, in rather a surly tone.

Indeed, I began to suspect that I was no favourite with this good man, whatever I might be with his wife: for I observed that whenever he accosted me, his countenance, which was remarkably open and good-natured, invariably underwent a change not at all flattering to my vanity; especially as I had no reason to impute it to any particular embarrassment or diffidence he might feel at the immeasurable distance which I conceived rank and acquirements had placed between us. I would fain have persuaded myself that I was perfectly indifferent to the opinion of such a man; while, at the

same time, could I have been assured of the cordial approbation of this worthy couple, I believe I should have experienced an inward satisfaction, decidedly at variance with the sentiments with which I affected to regard them.

These mistaken notions of inequality with which I entered the house, rendered me equally forgetful of my situation as a *guest*, and of the character of a gentlewoman, on which I especially prided myself; and caused me to behave with little more regard to the feelings or inclinations of my hosts, than I should have thought due to the master and mistress of a lodging-house. Mrs. Thoroughgood had a neat little china closet or beaufet, in which her ingenuity and contrivance were conspicuous in the arrangement of its contents to the best advantage, and of which I could perceive she was a little vain: the first day of my becoming an inmate, I took down one of the china cups for my medicine;

when she came into the room she washed and carefully replaced it, without further notice ; but the next day, I found one of a plainer set standing by the phial, affording me, as she naturally conceived, a sufficient hint for the future. Instead of this, however, a few days afterwards, on finding my usual cup omitted, I went again to the closet, and without scruple supplied its place from the set I had before assailed, and then left it on a table near the window ; presently came in little George, and in climbing up to speak to his sister in the garden, he threw it down, and the floor was bestrewed with its broken fragments !

“ There, you little creature,” said I, “ you have broken the cup,—what will your mother say ? ”

“ I am sorry,” said I, when she came in, “ that the child has broken your cup ; it is well it was nothing of more value.”

“ Oh dear, oh dear ! ” said she, as she picked up the useless fragments with

vexation in her face, “ this china was my mother’s !”

“ Well, Mrs. Thoroughgood,” said I, laughing, “ as I had some share in the mischief, I shall endeavour to repair it.”

“ That I do not desire, miss,” said she, as she still surveyed the broken pieces; “ indeed you cannot repair it, because it was my mother’s: but it cannot be helped now, and fretting won’t put it together again:” and then her countenance resumed its placid smile, and she appeared to have forgotten her little misfortune.

Although I had charged my memory with the promise of replacing the broken article, it is probable, through the multiplicity of my own more important concerns, that I might have thought no more of the affair; but for a casual circumstance, which brought it to my recollection, accompanied by a rather unpleasant feeling.

During my visit, Mrs. Thoroughgood

had a party of friends, when this very set of old china was brought forward with its appendages, carefully reserved for state occasions ; and among them, to complete the number, appeared an odd cup ! I now felt uneasy and impatient, till I had performed my promise ; accordingly, the next day, I went home, and without consulting my mother, purchased a complete set, which arrived at the farm nearly as soon as I did ; and now my conscience was pacified.

When it was unpacked, instead of being gratified by expressions of gratitude and amazement, I was surprised at perceiving an effort in Mrs. Thoroughgood to appear pleased. And why ? They certainly were far more showy than her own, more showy than I should have chosen for myself ; but I imagined they would be the very things to astonish and delight her ; this idea, however, arose from another of my mistakes : for the Thoroughgoods had no taste for gaudy

show. Of this, my observation might have already convinced me, and I ought not to have been surprised, that my ill-chosen present could not compensate for a valuable relic. The china, however, was placed in the grand deposit; but I suffered an additional mortification, by observing that the ancient cups still retained their prominent situation on the shelf; while mine were consigned to a more obscure corner, from whence their splendour could rarely attract the eye.

The regular habits and manner of life of the family at the farm, together with pure air and simple diet, operated so favourably on my health and spirits, that in a short time no vestiges of my former indisposition remained. A favourable juncture this to invoke the Muses, and they graciously hailed my recovery, and renewed their smiles; and now, influenced by the rural scenery, I no longer felt disposed to burlesque my friends, but indulged in the

more innocent amusement of writing soft pastorals and tender sonnets.

“ Some secret impulse wakes my former flame.”

I was now often seen by the family in a pensive attitude, reclining under a tree, with my pen in my hand; or, even when within doors, this sentimental employment was not confined to my chamber, but I yielded to the flights of my imagination in whatever apartment or company I happened to be: and notwithstanding my previous resolution to keep every member of the family at a respectful distance, I rather think, had they appeared inquisitive, I might so far have tolerated their impertinence, as to have indulged them with a sight of some of my productions. But no such thing happened. Not the least curiosity was manifested, or apparent interest taken, in my unconcealed literary occupations, by any member of the family; for how

intent soever I might be on my business, they were equally engaged and intent on their own.

When I had been some time in this agreeable retreat, I was surprised one day by the arrival of a young man, of interesting appearance, and of simple, but not of rustic manners. He entered the house as though he was no stranger, — the children assembled round him, and called him *William*, — and on the entrance of Mrs. Thoroughgood, he accosted her as his mother. Having had previously but a slight knowledge of the family, I had not heard of an elder son; I found that he was the son of Mr. Thoroughgood by a former wife: he had lost his mother during his infancy, but he had become the object of a truly maternal affection to his stepmother, the present Mrs. Thoroughgood. The young man inherited sufficient property from his mother's family, to procure him an education somewhat above his father's circumstances, and to

place him in a respectable apprenticeship, still leaving him a moderate sum with which to commence business. At this time the term of his apprenticeship had just expired.

His occasional visits, during my continuance at the farm, afforded me new opportunities of appreciating the merits of this amiable family. O that I had availed myself of such a favourable occasion for improving my own unsettled character! but, while involuntarily pleased with the traits of amiableness which I daily witnessed in parents and children, I never thought of making a salutary application of the lesson they presented, and by the contrast, which was but too evident, discovering and correcting my own deficiencies. I had always entertained a strong prejudice against stepmothers, but I was now constrained to admit the present instance as a decided exception to my general rule. In this important relation, the excellencies of

Mrs. Thoroughgood's character shone conspicuous. Nor was the son undeserving of the affection of which he was the object ; his kind, attentive, and respectful carriage towards this amiable woman, plainly indicated that he knew her worth—that he knew himself also—and, at the same time, gave the best promise that he would acquit himself well in every relation of life.

In truth, many of the excellent qualities of this plain family, which I did not understand, and scarcely perceived at the time, my longer knowledge of the world and maturer judgment have since enabled me to appreciate.

While they did not affect to appear above their circumstances, they spared no effort to improve them ; especially to extricate themselves from unavoidable embarrassments under which they laboured. Mr. Thoroughgood began business with a very small capital ; he had a young family, and, besides, had lately been involved in

an expensive lawsuit: it was this circumstance which had brought him acquainted with my father in his professional capacity. But it is surprising to see what great things may be effected by those who are thoroughly in earnest in their endeavours, and what apparently insurmountable difficulties may be overcome by those who have energy of character enough to grapple with them. Not at all discouraged by untoward circumstances, the Thoroughgoods only redoubled their efforts; for extraordinary efforts must be opposed to extraordinary difficulties, if ever they are to be surmounted: yet they did not sordidly abandon those rational comforts and enjoyments which were properly within their reach, and suitable to their humble rank. The air of comfort and of cheerfulness which pervaded this lowly dwelling, precluded the idea of its being the abode of preying anxiety and care.

Every day I became more ambitious of

the respect and good opinion of my kind hosts; and I really believe that I began to obtain a higher place in their esteem than I possessed in the earlier stage of our acquaintance. What progress I might have made by a longer continuance amongst them, is uncertain; for I was suddenly called home to attend my mother, whose increasing weakness but too strongly confirmed my gloomy presages.

With very different sensations from those with which I entered, did I take leave of this peaceful dwelling: I suspended my poetic effusions, hung my harp on the willows, and hastened home, to devote my time and thoughts to my languishing mother.

I believe she participated in the advantages of my visit to the farm, as it had in some degree softened the asperity of my temper, and furnished me with a more correct idea of filial piety, from the pleasing example of it I had lately contemplated. I think, during the imme-

diate season of affliction at least, I should have been *almost* amiable, could I have avoided the presence of Peter Patterson ; but whenever I returned to my mother after having encountered him, my voice and manner were evidently changed, and some fresh^o symptom of her declining strength was always required to restore me to that tenderness of manner which her state demanded. On such occasions I redoubled my attentions ; often, indeed, with more immediate regard to my own feelings than to her comfort ; and I fear that I might sometimes oppress her with officiousness, when I was labouring to atone for some unkindness or inattention.

CHAPTER III.

I HAD learned enough of religion while at the farm to convince me that it was indispensably necessary, at least in *dying* circumstances: and I was solicitous to communicate my new ideas on that important subject to my mother. But, alas! to accost her in the language of the Gospel seemed to me like speaking in an unknown tongue, or like the blind attempting to lead the blind. Deeply did I feel my own inability for such a serious task, having not yet learned the first principles of the oracles of God. That 'one thing was needful,' in *her* case, I could not question; but my notions were too confused even to allow me to express such a conviction intelligibly. I did, however, venture to notice, in a cursory way, what I had observed at the farm respecting the general influence of reli-

gion on the family, and on the particular individuals of it, especially the custom of family worship, and the appearance of real devotion which invariably pervaded the service. I said it was evident, from their daily conduct, that *they* did not deem the use of a form of prayer, and receiving the sacrament, a sufficient passport into eternity, after a life devoted to the service of the world.

My mother sighed deeply, appeared much interested in what I said, and continually alluded to the subject. As she became increasingly restless and uneasy, I had recourse to the Scriptures; but to me they were at present a sealed book, nor was I sufficiently conversant with them to select such passages as were most suited to her circumstances. In this state of mutual anxiety, how cordially did my poor mother acquiesce in my proposal of sending for Mrs. Thoroughgood, who might be admitted as a friend, without exciting suspicion in my father as to

any *new* religion, or religious connexions of that class to which he was ever decidedly hostile!

This good woman had no suspicion of our real object in sending for her: but when the subject was introduced, and she perceived how really desirous my mother was of spiritual conversation, she was not backward to engage in it. With what plainness and simplicity did this humble, but experienced Christian, expatiate on the hopes and consolations of the Gospel! affording an instance of the truth of the principle, that 'the foolish things of this world are often chosen to confound the wise,' or those who deem themselves so. O, where were now all my vain notions of superiority? where my pride, and arrogance, and conceit? How contemptible did all our little imaginary distinctions appear, when put in the scale against the spiritual knowledge and experience of this humble Christian! It was too evident, that while we had been minding earthly things, her

‘ conversation had been in heaven—and that, while diligent in business, she had also been fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ Happy would it have been for me, had the impression I received on this solemn occasion (another opportunity put into my hands) not proved ‘ like the early cloud, or morning dew, which soon vanishes away.’ But no more distracting or dissipating scenes were to annoy my mother:—May I indulge the hope, that the important truths she then heard through this humble channel met, on her part, with a sincere and happy reception, and so extended their benign influence beyond the grave!

No sooner had her spirit taken its flight, than I abandoned myself to all the extravagance of grief. I said (and I believed what I said) that another hour’s happiness did not await me in this world. I inflicted the keenest anguish on myself by endeavouring to recal to my mind even the most trifling irregularities of temper

from my earliest recollection, and was ingenious in aggravating every instance of disobedience and inattention. How many of those painful remembrances might have been spared by habitual self-command and government of my passions, while the precious opportunity was afforded me; and at how much less expense to my feelings, than that which I now voluntarily inflicted on myself to little or no beneficial purpose! Indeed, I was just now too much absorbed in sorrow to pay a due regard to my father, or to seize the favourable opportunity for drawing forth his affectionate feelings towards myself, and thus attempting to cherish that natural intimacy to which we had hitherto been strangers. *

He was very sorry for his loss:—and I was assured, from unquestionable authority, that when the coffin was lowered into the vault, his lip quivered, and he wiped a *real* tear from his cheek.

I now found myself in a new situation;

the difficulties of which I had not foreseen ; although my dear mother, from the persuasion of her own impending dissolution, had not been remiss in warning me of them, and urging upon me the necessity of preparation for the circumstances in which I was to be placed. These prudential admonitions were never taken in good part, because I conceived they tacitly implied an imputation of deficiency, which my proud and unsubdued spirit could never endure.

One of the first embarrassments by which I found myself annoyed was the management of the servants, who, like most other servants, required direction and superintendance, and who, like most others too, were averse to submit to it from one who knew less than themselves : so that, between mistress and maids, the house gradually lost that air of neatness and order which had ever distinguished it during the government of its late mistress : for my mother, till within a

very few weeks of her death, had been so far able to superintend her family affairs, as to maintain at least the appearance of regularity and comfort in the house ; which was more than could be said of it afterwards, while under my management.

My father, though so much absorbed in business, was by no means indifferent to the comforts to which he had been accustomed ; and could ill brook any deficiency in those accommodations and indulgences that he was wont to look for in the short intervals of relaxation which he allowed himself. I have reason to believe that he felt the loss of his wife in these respects in a degree which he had not anticipated ; for I must confess that my domestic management did me little credit. On one occasion he said, shaking his head, and looking very solemn, " O Lucy, Lucy, this will never do !" Alas ! I little suspected the portentous meaning of that short sentence.

In the mean time, Peter Patterson began gradually to resume his baneful ascendancy over my spirit, and being no longer checked by the presence of my mother, his impertinences became increasingly offensive. He seemed particularly pleased when some negligence or mismanagement of mine had excited my father's anger: on such occasions, as soon as he was withdrawn, Peter never failed to sport some piece of absurd banter: "Ah, Miss Burrows, it is a charming thing to be the mistress of the house — we have fine doings now!" It is true, that speeches of this sort, utterly devoid as they were of wit or sense, might have been treated with disregard and contempt; it was only the morbid state of my own feelings which gave them their power to torment me.

But although Peter exhibited no talent in his attempts of this kind, there was one thing in which he did excel, and that was in the art of cutting out watch-

papers. To his proficiency in this accomplishment, all his friends, and many of his friends' friends, could bear ample testimony: there was not a fair lady of his acquaintance but could exhibit one of these specimens of his ingenuity, suspended by her side in the case of her watch. They were executed with such laborious neatness and admirable precision, as actually to deceive the beholders into the persuasion that they were the result of a momentary process effected by a stamp; but Peter could never endure to lie under such a stigma, and therefore he afforded his friends ocular demonstration of their being the produce of intense labour and application, with those simple instruments, a pair of scissars!—labour and application, indeed, for which it was not so easy to find time at my father's house:—but what wonders may be effected when people have a favourite object in view, and devote to it the whole energy of their

minds ! they will seize their opportunities, and be parsimonious of the smallest remnants of their time. It was astonishing to see how many watch-papers were manufactured by Peter's constant adherence to the simple principle of employing every leisure moment ; so that, aided, it must be confessed, by an occasional wet Sunday, and a little night-watching, notwithstanding his habitual munificence, he had constantly an ample stock in hand, ready for unexpected demands. It is true, he did not display any remarkable diversity of invention in this laudable pursuit — a lion, a swan, and "P. P." — a lion, a swan, and P. P. were his only varieties of design ; and when you had admired the flowing mane of the one, the delicate plumage of the other, and the correct execution of the third, there was no further inducement to disturb the tottering piles of birds, and beasts, and initials, for you had seen fac-similes of them all.

" Permit me, Miss Burrows," said he, one day, (insultingly as it seemed to me,) " to present you with a watch-paper : shall it be a lion, a swan, a pair of turtle-doves, or P. L. P., which is the same thing, you know ?"

" Do !" said I, " and I advise you to cut it from the skin of a snake, or the web of a spider." So saying, I turned on my heel, and flaunted out of the room ; and he accosted me no more on the subject of his watch-papers.

But what is become of my brother Richard all this time ? We could not tell : we had received but one letter from him since his arrival in India, and by this time we might have been repeatedly cheered by news from a far country ; especially as we had not been remiss on our part of the correspondence ; and in every letter we earnestly entreated him to relieve our anxieties by the earliest opportunities. But these repeated efforts proved ineffectual, and we were left to all

the painful suppositions of vague conjecture. I say “we,” because my father really evinced considerable anxiety on the occasion; and once exclaimed, “I wish I had not let that boy go to sea:” which was for him an unusual concession.

But these parental anxieties did not divert him from what appeared to have been his settled purpose. In conformity to the emphatic and memorable sentence, “O Lucy, Lucy, this will never do!” — after having passed a decent period of widowhood, he announced his intention of bringing me home a mother! This seemed a death-wound to my heart! The grief for my late loss, which had by this time subsided into a sort of pensive calm, now revived with new poignancy: but I knew that expostulations of mine would prove unavailing; for my father was not to be diverted from any purpose by me; and certainly not on this occasion. Indeed, whose fathers or sons are to be

diverted from their purpose when determined to marry ?

It was but a recent acquaintance ; my father had met with the lady at the house of her brother, with whom she lived : thinking her a suitable person, he took no circuitous course ; but came to the point at once. It was not in character for the lady to be quite so prompt in her decision—she had many scruples—or would have had many, had her lover been disposed to listen to them ; but having no time for dallying, he quickly brought the matter to a crisis—it was *now or never*, “*yes*,” or “*no*.” The lady said—“*yes*.”

I had never seen her till we were introduced to each other as mother and daughter—it is a moment I shall ever remember. She received me with the utmost cordiality and apparent good will ; but of my own feelings I had not an equal command—my demeanour was sullen and reserved, neither conciliating nor prepossessing. How unlike my mother!—thought

Is how rosy and healthy she looks!—as though that had been a crime. But whatever might be her opinion of me, her behaviour continued to be unobjectionable; so that I seemed without the least shadow of excuse for my sullenness and reserve. My father was too much occupied in business to observe these things, or, if he did, to care about them; yet, I think, had he paid but common attention to what was passing in his family, he must soon have discovered that his new wife was a designing woman; and that, notwithstanding external appearances, her dispositions towards me were by no means friendly: but her general demeanour was so plausible as completely to conceal her arts from common observers; and even, in some degree, from those against whom they were especially directed.

In the mean time, the improved aspect of the family was visible to every eye:—the house throughout bore all the marks of management, skill, and address; and

she did not scruple to insinuate, in an indirect way, what was but too evident—that the present reformation in domestic affairs had not taken place before it was wanted.

But what produced the most irritating sensations in my bosom, was her arranging every thing anew that she could suppose had been adjusted by my mother. Scarcely an article of furniture was suffered to retain its station, if she could discover that her predecessor had placed it where it stood: to remove every vestige or memorial of her seemed to be her invariable aim. And for all these changes she assigned reasons so plausible, that they could neither easily be controverted, nor charged with the invidious motive from which they really sprung.

Nor, amidst her multifarious cares and renovations, did she omit to pay particular attention to my habits and manners: professing the most sincere zeal for my good, and making many declarations of her

friendly concern on my account, she suffered scarcely a word, look, or motion to pass unnoticed. I was now in my twentieth year, and my natural disposition and previous habits were as little suited as my age to this sort of school discipline. I believe I had the general reputation of being a good figure, and graceful in my deportment—at any rate, a considerable sum had been expended to render me so; yet in her unbounded zeal and solicitude for my good, my step-mother discovered that I stooped insufferably; and to remedy this alleged defect, whenever I happened to look down, I was sure to feel a tap on the shoulder, while she fixed her eyes on my face, and drew herself up to teach me by example the proper attitude! But she had a refractory spirit to contend with; the invariable effect of every such tap on the shoulder, was to make me stoop the more; so that I was in imminent danger of actually acquiring the habit which hitherto had no exist-

ence. My *real* faults (which were not a few) I persisted in with confirmed obstinacy, and those of which I was falsely accused, I perversely adopted; while amid all this studied contumacy on my part, she remained cool and persevering, inflicting upon me, under covert of kindness, every species of insult that her ingenuity could devise.

What rendered my mortification the more intolerable, was my having to endure many of these maternal chastisements in the presence of Peter Patterson; to whom, evidently, nothing could have been more gratifying. In a very short time my mother and this young gentleman perfectly understood each other: the significant looks which were interchanged between them, admitted of no misconstruction; and this close intimacy and league increased my aversion (if any thing could do it) to them both. Still my mother took care, that I should have nothing on which to found a plausible complaint;

and even if any such occasion had been given me, I was by no means sure of redress from my father; while, had I failed in my appeal, my situation would probably have been worse than before.

In my dear mother's time, I had taken it into my head to work a carpet; she did not approve of the undertaking, and from what she knew of my disposition, as well as from the magnitude of the task, she augured that it would never be finished.

"It ~~will~~, mamma!" said I, "and that you will see."

"I shall never see it, Lucy!" she replied.

But of course my will was the law:— the canvas and the worsteds were bought, and for a few weeks my perseverance triumphed over her incredulity; but in due time my zeal began gradually to abate, the carpet was only resorted to occasionally, and at increasingly distant intervals, till at length it was laid aside, and almost forgotten. But now I began to

resume my labours as a relief from the daily perturbation of my mind. The first moment of her seeing the carpet, my step-mother adopted the opinion of her predecessor, relative to the improbability of its completion : this was a new stimulus to my perseverance, and my industry increased in proportion to her ill bodings and disapprobation ; especially as she made very free remarks upon the tastelessness of the design, presuming, I suppose, on its having been done under my mother's direction. She suggested several alterations, which I plainly saw would have been improvements ; not one of which, however, I adopted, while I secretly wished they had been proposed by any body else.

But what would have been the proper antidote for the unhappy temper which thus destroyed my peace ? It was at hand, though I refused it : — religion offered both directions for my conduct, and consolation under my trials ; — its

benign influences, shed over my perturbed spirit, would have calmed the internal storm, and allayed my turbulent passions. He, who “when he was reviled, reviled not again,”—who, “when he suffered, threatened not,”—has said, “learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” But how could I find rest, who had recourse to any thing rather than to that sovereign antidote for the troubled mind? It is true, that I had received some impressive lessons, during my visit at the farm; but the few seeds then scattered, not “falling on good ground,” produced no fruit; and now I was left to all the baneful effects of an ungoverned spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE day my father had requested his wife to call on a person, and leave a message, during her morning walk ; adding, at the same time, that if she were there by a certain hour, she would be sure to find him at home. My mother, who was fond of making me wait upon her, in the hope, I am persuaded, of provoking me to disobedience, with one of her usual taps on the shoulder (which always produced an inexpressible effect on my nerves), requested me to be so good as to fetch down her hat and cloak. I immediately withdrew, and sat myself down quietly at the window of my own apartment ; from whence, in about an hour, I saw her walking leisurely down the street ; and I confess I felt a secret gratification in this silent triumph of my perverseness.

At dinner my father inquired if she had seen the person on whom she had called.

“No,” she replied, “for he was just gone out.”

“Out!” said my father, “then you were too late.”

“I was,—rather late,” said she.

“But did you not say you were going immediately?”

“I did, for I thought I was.”

“You thought you were! and pray what hindered you?”

“Only a trifle, Mr. Burrows: I wish you would drop the subject.”

“I cannot drop the subject,” said he, “for it is no trifle to me; your negligence has occasioned me the greatest inconvenience. I beg to know, what prevented you from being there in time, according to your promise, Mrs. Burrows?”

“Nothing worth mentioning—nothing at all,” said she, “only that Lucy omitted

to bring my hat when I desired her; and, expecting it every minute, I waited till it was too late — that is all."

"Lucy," said my father, striking his hand violently on the table; "Lucy, you *must* obey your mother."

There was a dead silence: but the satisfaction of my mother, and the triumph of Peter, were too ill concealed to escape my notice; while my extreme agitation, I am sure, must have been equally visible to them. No sooner had we risen from table, than I fled to my chamber, made up a small parcel, and left the house, without any distinct idea of where I was going, or which way I should direct my course. I had reached the end of the street before I began to reflect on my situation; I then made a full stop. And while I pause here in my narrative, I will just take occasion to remark, that it is a serious thing for children to leave their parents' house under any circumstances; it is sailing forth into a world, of which (whatever they may think) they can know but

little; and many who are impatient to escape from the restraints and petty annoyances of home, find that these inconveniences have been light in comparison with the difficulties that are awaiting them without. But I can stay no longer to make sage remarks; the evening advances, and I have no home: it behoves me to find one.

Of all my acquaintances and reputed friends, I could think of none, in my present emergency, of whom I could feel confident that they were at once able and willing to afford me an asylum. There were, indeed, very few people whom I particularly liked; therefore, by a natural inference, I concluded that very few particularly liked me; and it requires something more than common courtesy to open one's doors to a run-away daughter; especially if she has not a very good story to tell. There was, indeed, my faithful and unalterable friend Miss Watson, who would have divided her last shilling with me; but alas, poor girl! she had a refrac-

tory father and mother at home; and from her account of matters, I feared she was not so completely mistress of the house, as to have afforded an asylum to a fugitive friend.

As these ideas involuntarily obtruded themselves on my mind, I felt a momentary impulse of despair; and I know not whither it might have driven me, had not the recollection of Mrs. Thoroughgood, and her peaceful and hospitable abode, darted into my mind. Thither, without further hesitation, I directed my steps; nothing discouraged by the length of the walk, the lateness of the evening, or the loneliness of the road.

I met the good woman on the threshold: perceiving my agitation, she evinced the most friendly solicitude to assuage my distress. I briefly related the circumstances which had occasioned my abrupt visit, and endeavoured to give her some general idea of the provocations which had driven me from home: but I was presently interrupted by the entrance of

Mr. Thoroughgood, to whom his wife related the substance of my story.

“ Miss Burrows,” said he, “ you are welcome to remain under our roof as long as may be convenient to yourself; but I must acquaint your father with it, lest we should seem to interfere in family matters. I shall wait on him in the morning, and in the mean time I advise you to be composed. Your father, I dare say, will willingly receive you again, if you properly humble yourself; which is the thing, in my opinion, he has a right to expect.”

Humble myself! thought I; what does the man mean? I never did such a thing in my life.

Although this sober advice was not the most congenial to my proud feelings; yet the disturbed state of those feelings did not prevent my enjoying the comfort of having a roof over my head, to a degree which I never did before: yet I could not but contrast my own situation with that of the happy group around

me. Neither anxiety nor self-reproach agitated their peaceful countenances: if any transient expression clouded their brow, it was that of sympathy and tender compassion for their unhappy guest.

The next morning, when I saw Mr. Thoroughgood set out for my father's, my heart misgave me; for as I had never yet had an open rupture with him, all my anticipations rested on vague conjecture. From what I knew of his temper, there appeared much to dread, and little to hope.

At length Mr. Thoroughgood returned, and put the following note into my hand:

“ LUCY,

“ I have requested Mr. Thoroughgood to accommodate you till I can further determine what is to be done. As you are dissatisfied with your home, we must find you another; but remember, your personal exertions will be necessary for

your future support: and I advise you to prepare for that change in your circumstances which your own voluntary act obliges me to announce to you.

“ R. BURROWS.”

On reading this note, I confess my high spirit felt a shock, and a sort of qualm came over me, to which I had not hitherto been accustomed. *My personal exertions!* What could be the extent of my father's meaning? In what situation was I to be placed?—And indeed, I could not help asking myself, what am I fit for? These ideas were so novel to me, that I knew not how to dispose of them otherwise than by half admitting that the society of my step-mother and Peter Patterson might be even more tolerable, than trying an experiment for which I knew myself to be so ill prepared.

But I had reason to believe that my father's doors were bolted and barred against me for ever: and that it was now

too late for me to appreciate the merits of those who dwelt within them: we were never more likely to come in contact.

My mother, considerately and attentively, had sent some of my clothes, accompanied by a civil note respecting some things which she supposed I should want, but which she could not readily find; without, however, making the most distant allusion to what had passed — so much has a cool tempér the advantage over an impetuous one.

I was mortified to hear what a hue and cry had been raised about me in the neighbourhood; persons had been despatched in all directions after the fugitive, and my mother, as in duty bound, had herself used every effort to discover my retreat: they were even preparing to drag a pond, in a lane, up which it was reported I had been seen to pass. My father, too, was penning an advertisement, and had just written “*Whereas*,”

when Mr. Thoroughgood appeared before him.

Mr. Thoroughgood, like many others, had been imposed on by the speciousness of my mother's manner, and he seemed inclined to assign to me more than my share of the blame; but I perceived that his wife's opinion on the subject preponderated on my side, although I could not exactly ascertain whether I was particularly distinguished by her favour, because her behaviour was uniformly kind and courteous. It was not so dubious a matter with respect to her husband; habitually as affable and courteous as his wife, his carriage towards me had ever a decided air of reserve—there was an indefinite something, unlike himself, in his manner whenever he accosted me. I felt pained by this reserve; and thus involuntarily paid the homage which sterling worth, in whatever rank it may be found, eventually exacts from folly and inexperience.

By this time William Thoroughgood had established himself in business in the town. His prudence, skill, and activity, were crowned with success. He was not only a man *in* business, but a man *of* business ; consequently he had little leisure, and I rarely saw him, except on Sunday, which he always spent at home ; not in feasting or dissipation, but in duties and pursuits accordant with the purposes for which the observance of that day was enjoined. Then it was that I saw the family to advantage ; the decency and regularity which pervaded the whole house had a certain influence even upon such a mind as mine ; perhaps somewhat better prepared to receive a favourable impression, both by my former visit, and by my present humiliating circumstances. But whatever impressions I received, they were transient, and subject to interruptions, from the nature of my early habits, which often rendered this strict observance of the Sabbath irksome

to me, notwithstanding the amiable spirit by which Christian conduct was here recommended.

— It might please some readers, were I to describe the progress of my intimacy with William Thoroughgood ; and the result of it would probably be anticipated : that a young lady, not deficient in personal advantages and accomplishments — with the additional charm of being a damsel in distress, should interest such a young man, will not excite surprise. He *was* interested — his attachment became too conspicuous to be concealed ; and he gradually succeeded in removing from my mind those feelings, which in prouder days would have presented insurmountable obstacles to the very idea of such a connexion. His quick-sighted parents, I believe, perceived his attachment, before he was well aware of it himself ; but as soon as he had ascertained the state of his own feelings, they were formally announced to his father and mother. What

reception such intelligence met with, I only discovered, by perceiving, that in proportion to the son's attentions, the parents — even the gentle, kind-hearted mother — became cool, and formal, and distant. Ah ! thought I, now they imagine me disinherited, they are averse to the connexion: once it would not have been so ! This was a source of severe mortification to my pride. Who could have imagined that farmer Thoroughgood would have shrunk from a family alliance with the fair daughter of R. Burrows, Esq.?

But now my father proceeded to put his purposed plan in execution : — it was not to make me a lady's maid, or a milliner, or a mantua-maker ; — no — I was to be a private governess ! At the same time he expressed his willingness, should I deem myself not sufficiently qualified for such a situation, to be, at any expense that might be necessary for that purpose. As I had received a boarding-school education, I did account myself sufficiently

qualified, and felt by no means disposed to submit to any further routine that should require industry and application. But, qualified or not qualified, the scheme I heartily disliked ; and so I should any other scheme that implied degradation of rank, and personal exertion : however, I entertained not the most distant hope that my father, — who had decreed that a refractory girl, leaving her home, should suffer the just penalty of her conduct — would be diverted from his purpose.

But for once I was mistaken ; while the most vigilant inquiries were instituted to procure me an eligible situation, William Thoroughgood arrested them, and occasioned a complete revolution in my prospects, by a direct application to my father ! He received the proposal with manifest surprise, and some symptoms of hesitation : nor did he decide so promptly as his extraordinary insight into remote consequences usually enabled him to do : but he was too wise a man, not to

appreciate the substantial merits of my suitor: too much a man of business, not to entertain a favourable impression of a character in those respects so congenial to his own. A very cursory survey of a man's general conduct enabled him with tolerable precision to pronounce of one, "This man will do;" and of another—"that man will never do;"—and as his favourable auspices, in the present case, were confirmed by a closer investigation, he did not suffer minor objections (especially with his present alienated feelings towards his daughter) to prevail. Accordingly, I was once more allowed to return to my home, in the full anticipation of soon finally quitting it; and with the reasonable hope that family feuds would at least be suspended during so short a term. I certainly should have felt somewhat embarrassed and uncomfortable, however, at facing my friends and acquaintance, in the recollection of my recent flight from home, had I not hoped

that their attention would be diverted by my present unexpected circumstances.

To my great surprise, I found, that my external reinstatement in my father's favour had not produced the effect I had imagined on Mr. and Mrs. Thoroughgood; so that it evidently was to *me* more than to my circumstances, that they principally objected. This was a humbling consideration, and I took leave of the hitherto friendly asylum, and its worthy inhabitants, with apparent coolness and chagrin.

It was but too evident, that this unexpected revolution in my affairs did not entirely accord with my mother's feelings or plans: she was too competent a judge of character, not to perceive, that my suitor was, in some important respects, the very person to cement the affections of the father and daughter, and thereby to maintain an influence over him, too powerful to be destroyed by her arts; but she was too much the mistress of herself to

expose her chagrin and disappointment to observation, by direct hostility :— she therefore received William Thoroughgood with an appearance of cordiality ; but I was not without occasional misgivings and apprehensions of some mischievous interference on her part, from my former experience of her duplicity.

We went on, however, tolerably well for some time, and treated each other with mutual civility ; indeed, I felt myself decidedly in a better mood than formerly, from the near prospect of changing my present irksome situation for one of comparative felicity, in which I should, at any rate, be freed from the perpetual provocation of the malignant passions. This tranquillity of mind ameliorated my temper, and made me view objects in a different light. Even Peter Patterson himself seemed less insufferable, and my general deportment towards him partook of these altered feelings.—

How amiable people can be when they are pleased !

Who would have ventured to tell me now, or who could have done so with impunity — that the step I took in leaving my father's house, was an offence in the sight of heaven, and would ultimately bring down on my head its just reward, when to that very step I owed my present propitious circumstances ? No ; I should have said indignantly, “ Let this happy result plead my cause ; Providence smiles on my conduct.”

Yet the light in which a matrimonial connexion, like that which was now before me, must appear to my friends and common acquaintances, would certainly have prevented my entertaining the thought of it, if I had not already been placed before the world in the most humbling circumstances. I could not but feel myself separated from the sphere in which I had been used to move ; and

wounded pride seemed even to be consoled by the idea of hiding my head in a humbler rank. Had it not been for a feeling of this kind, added to the necessity which my present circumstances laid before me, of seeking a home, either by marrying, or by personal exertions, I should probably have resolved not to endure the continued coolness of my lover's parents. I expressed my regret to him, that I should be the means of occasioning any disagreement in his family; this, however, he assured me was not the case to the extent I might suppose; — although, he frankly acknowledged, that his father and mother did not enter into his views so cordially as he could wish; but, I perceived he always endeavoured to evade the subject.

Among the number of my female friends, I had, like most other young ladies, a *confidante*, towards whom I should have deemed it a flagrant violation of the fine sentiments we mutually professed,

to have indulged any reserve. Accordingly, my friend before mentioned, *Miss Watson*, was acquainted with all the affairs of my family — all that had occurred with which I was myself acquainted, from my earliest recollection to the present moment. Of course, this important affair of mine engrossed no inconsiderable portion of our attention. Could some faithful scribe have noted down our conversations, an ample specimen would have been afforded of the effusions of vain, selfish, and frivolous minds. On the principle, that “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” out of our own mouths might we have been condemned; for it was evident, not only that “God was not in all our thoughts,” but that they were engrossed by foolish and hurtful passions. Oh, that so many precious hours in the cheerful morning of my life, (hours that can never be recalled,) should have been thus misspent! If for every idle word a

strict account is to be rendered, who can reflect on such seasons of vanity and trifling but with shame and sorrow?

Now, to Miss Watson's taste, nothing could have been more congenial than my present circumstances. She took the most friendly interest in the affair from the beginning: quite an adept in the business, there was no branch of it to which she could not turn her hand. She had the reputation, among her associates, of being able so to outwit old folks, and manage young ones, as to have all events of this kind under her absolute control: and entertaining the same opinion of her sagacity, penetration, and address myself, I imagined my affairs could not be consigned to abler hands: accordingly, I resolved to be guided by her in all respects.

Of the sincere attachment of William Thoroughgood, no reasonable suspicion could be harboured; but it partook rather too much of the sobriety of his character

and habits, to accord entirely with our romantic notions. My friend, therefore, suggested, that it wanted a little stimulus. To excite his jealousy appeared, on the whole, the most feasible plan; but the grand difficulty was, where to select an instrument for the purpose. Certain it is, that with all my exterior advantages, for some unknown reason, I never could boast of a crowd of suitors, or in other words, I was not *popular*; and, therefore, as the scheme was somewhat like an attempt to work without tools, I believe it would have been relinquished by me altogether, but for the expedients of my friend's more fertile invention. I confess nothing could have been more repugnant to my feelings, than the idea of making Peter Patterson serve our purpose in this manœuvre: my soul revolted at his name. Till lately, since I had been in better humour, to have imposed upon myself a show of the most distant civilities, would have appeared utterly im-

practicable; and, even now, to break through my accustomed reserve seemed a task too severe: besides, I knew his character well enough to be assured, that if once I removed the restraints which my distant manner imposed upon him, he would presume so far that his impertinence would become intolerable. All this I well knew: but what difficulties will not people encounter, when in pursuit of a favourite object, while a straw in their path will appear sufficiently formidable to turn them aside from the most laudable undertakings!

My operations commenced very gradually; for I determined not to advance a single step, or put myself to the least expense of feeling beyond what appeared absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of my purpose: but hitherto all my manœuvres appeared to be unnoticed by William Thoroughgood; indeed, I question whether Peter engaged more of his attention than the

china images which adorned the mantle-piece; and as I found no effect produced but that of reviving my tormentor's impertinencies to an insufferable degree, I began to be tired of my scheme. • Most provokingly he would not confine them to the times when my lover was present, when I *did* want them; but went on with unremitting persecution in his absence, when I certainly *did not* want them. However, at length there were symptoms of success: occasionally I observed a slight flush tinge the cheek of William; and now I began to congratulate myself on the prospect of ultimate triumph in this arduous and repugnant undertaking. “From henceforth,” said I to myself, “William Thoroughgood is my slave,” which is what Miss Watson assured me every lover ought to be.

One day I accidentally dropt a copy of verses out of my work-bag; Peter attempted to snatch them up, declaring he would read them; — I was endeavouring

to rescue the paper from his grasp, when William Thoroughgood appeared before us! I was evidently confused and embarrassed at his witnessing what must have appeared an indecorous familiarity;— his behaviour was equally constrained, and his visit short: indeed, being at a loss how to conduct myself, I felt relieved when he departed. After two or three days of suspense as to the effect of this circumstance, I received the following note:—

“ MY DEAR MISS BURROWS,

“ Nothing has occurred, I hope, to warrant a suspicion, that my recent professions were premature; yet you will greatly relieve my anxiety, by permitting a short explanation, relative to a few circumstances which, I confess, have appeared strange: that you will indulge my impatience by an early reply, saying when I may be so favoured, will essentially oblige,

“ Yours, most sincerely,

“ Wm. THOROUGHGOOD.”

The effect produced by this epistle was rather depressing, till I communicated its contents to my kind adviser, who triumphantly exclaimed —

“ So — we shall bring him into order at last; — you see I was right — now follow my advice — take no notice of this note, and in a few days depend upon it he will humble himself, and be ever at your command. Explanation, indeed! — A woman of proper spirit does not stoop to explanations.”

I confess I did not entirely agree with these sentiments; nevertheless I determined to maintain a dignified silence.

My dignified silence continued uninterrupted day after day, and week after week, but no William Thoroughgood was seen or heard of. And now, if Peter, from the recent encouragements I had given him, had suffered his early intentions to revive, my present conduct was more than sufficient to put them to flight, and he soon felt himself obliged to retire, at least to that distance at which I had

been wont to keep him. But I thought it somewhat strange that my mother should express so little surprise at my present circumstances. She did once or twice, indeed, inquire what was become of Mr. Thoroughgood; but it seemed rather to save appearances than to gratify curiosity. My father, from the beginning, had been evidently piqued and mortified at the cool reception I received from William's family, who, in his opinion, ought to have esteemed me a very good match for their son. When his visits were discontinued, he naturally inquired of me the cause: but from the character of the young man, I perceived he was disposed to suspect that the blame lay with me. To have shown him the note would but have confirmed his suspicions: I therefore told him generally that we had disagreed, and that I thought it doubtful whether the affair would proceed any further.

“ I have nothing to do with lovers' quarrels,” said he; “ but you should cer-

tainly have known your own minds before you proceeded thus far."

At length the following note from William Thoroughgood terminated my suspense: —

" DEAR MISS BURROWS,

" As you have not thought proper to reply to my last note, I must now (after so many weeks of painful suspense) beg you to consider yourself free from all engagements with me, that might interfere with your future prospects. And I have only to request, that I may be permitted ever to style myself, your

— " Sincere friend and well-wisher,

" WM. THOROUGHGOOD."

CHAPTER V.

I now thought it incumbent on me to inform my father, that the affair was at an end *by mutual consent*: but he was not the man to have let it pass off without formal investigation, had not his pride been wounded. To have made any inquiries would not have accorded with that indifference to the connexion which he affected: he therefore permitted the affair to die away quietly, in opposition to his general maxim, of suffering none to escape with impunity who had treated him with slight or insult.

“ You are now just where you were,” said my father, whose hopes of getting rid of me had now vanished.

Far otherwise, thought I; for I found myself, by many degrees, more miserable than before I had quitted my home, and taken refuge at the farm. My mother

and Peter seemed again to have combined together to renew their respective persecutions. Nothing could exceed my habitual state of irritation from the torturing circumstances with which I was beset; and, as if these were not enough, I suffered my distempered imagination to inflict upon me unnecessary pain. I was simple enough to measure the interest people took in my affairs by my own irritated feelings—to suppose, that what was uppermost in my own thoughts, must of necessity be so in theirs; and thus I imagined that my recent disappointment would be the almost exclusive subject of conversation among all who knew me. That it furnished, just at the time, the topic of some gossip is very probable; but I had yet to learn that there are other concerns in the world quite as momentous as love affairs—that there are disappointments and losses quite as afflictive as the loss of a lover; and that many of those who I imagined were solely occupied in sport-

ing with my misfortunes, might themselves be the prey of some wasting grief or habitual anxiety, of which their neighbours knew nothing ; for “ the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger meddleth not with it.” It is the most absurd egotism to imagine that *our* joys, or *our* sorrows, excite any thing more than a transient interest among our common acquaintance ; and that they will either laugh or cry at our expense, much beyond the present moment.

My friend, Miss Watson, had managed her own affairs so much better than she had done mine, as to be actually on the point of marriage ; and so far was she from sympathising with my forlorn situation, or expressing the least contrition for the fatal error into which she had led me, that I was credibly informed, she expressed herself with the utmost indifference on the subject ; at the same time evincing *her* selfishness, by requiring me

to forget my own wounded feelings, in the contemplation of her fair prospects.

One day, I accidentally met Mrs. Thoroughgood in the town—her countenance resumed its benign expression—no reserve was visible, and I almost persuaded myself, that she was aiming at a reconciliation between me and her son; but this was a short-lived delusion; the very next day, I heard, that he was addressing an amiable young woman of respectable connexions, and some property.

And now, no longer able to endure the studied insults of my mother; which, while ingeniously calculated to harass my feelings, were as dexterously concealed from all others; I suffered her to accomplish her purpose, and, regardless of the consequences, broke forth into open hostility. But this was of short duration; for my father, misled by appearances, believing the provocation to be all on one side, reverted to his original plan, and

proceeded to put it in execution with such energy and zeal, that a situation was procured for me, before I had time to decide which of the two evils was the least:—going out, or staying at home.

The seat of a gentleman, a few miles distant, was to be my first retreat from domestic persecutions; and a little girl of four years old my sole charge.

As I supposed it would be understood, that family reasons, and not necessitous circumstances, occasioned my leaving home, I anticipated a reception correspondent to the idea I entertained of my own situation; and pleased myself with the interest I expected to excite in the lady, by the recital of my misfortunes and adventures; but I was presently convinced of my mistake. She wanted a governess for her little girl; she treated me with the respect due to my character as such, but was otherwise unapproachable. I shall ever remember how little and insignificant I invariably felt in her presence. *I*, who

had esteemed myself a personage of such vast consequence at the farm, and indeed every where else, now felt a sensation as novel as it was unexpected. The distinctions on which I had prided myself vanished into air when I perceived at how many removes I was thought to stand from the family who required my services. To the pride and self-importance of some characters, this might have afforded a salutary lesson: but severer discipline was necessary to subdue that deeply-rooted principle in my stubborn soul, and to bring me to a proper estimate of myself, and of others.

There was one essential defect in my temper, which contributed to render my prospects in this new situation inauspicious: this was, my dislike to children. When I assumed the character of a governess, I had not sufficiently taken into the account the little creature to be committed to my care, nor given myself scarcely an anxious thought respecting

the manner in which I should acquit myself towards her. I, therefore, from the first moment we came in contact, found her an insufferable incumbrance. She was a wayward child, who required both patience and skill to manage; qualities in which I was essentially deficient. • That the governess and the pupil should be on ill terms, therefore, was a natural consequence. I commenced a sort of defensive system of discipline, with no other object in view, than my own ease and convenience; at least, the culture of my pupil held a very subordinate place in my account: and Miss Mary retaliated, by openly declaring, that she did not love me, and that I should not hear her read. The only tolerable part of my task was that of rambling with her over her father's extensive grounds: this was so congenial to my taste that it would have revived all my poetical enthusiasm, had it not been for my tormentor: I could rarely succeed

in embodying one happy thought by despatching her to gather me some daisies or butterflowers, ere this little counterpart of Peter Patterson was again at my elbow. In vain I drew out my pencil, yielding to the spirit of inspiration;—I never could complete a single couplet. .

“ Long shall the stream that wanders through the
mead

“ Reflect”——

“ No, that's a daisy; run and get me
a primrose.”

“ Reflect the image”——

“ I don't know, child: go and play.”

“ Long shall the stream that wanders through the
mead

“ Reflect the image of the bending”——

“ What do you want, Miss Mary? if
you will be so troublesome, you shall go
to your lesson.” .

And so I put up my pencil in despair.
Surely, thought I, my lot is peculiar; for

I am to have a tormentor wherever I go. *

This state of things could be of no long continuance. Miss Mary and her mother were unanimous in their opinion that I did not suit them; and the latter politely informed me, that she had no further need of my services. I now began to be seriously conscious of my deficiencies, and exceedingly dreaded my father's knowing how unsettled I was:—uncertain what desperate step he might be instigated to take by my designing mother. I was, however, unexpectedly relieved from this anxiety, by hearing of another situation, in a family somewhat more on a level with my own rank; and I now began to form certain wholesome resolutions, founded on the new and important discovery I had made, namely — that people required some service for their money; and that it was for their own convenience, not for mine, that they received me into their families.

The favourable reports I had heard, inspired me with more sanguine hopes respecting my new situation than I had hitherto indulged: and in consequence of this, I conscientiously set about taking a sort of cursory survey of my mental qualifications. I had never doubted that I was what is generally termed a superior young woman; I know I passed for such with some people; but oh, when I came to serious and impartial investigation, in what a ruinous and neglected state did my mind appear! I found I was totally unqualified to acquit myself well in any department of life: but more arduous exertions being necessary, than time and opportunity allowed, I was compelled to submit to imperious necessity, and commence my new duties, if with some better intentions, yet still under all the manifold disadvantages of which I was now in some degree conscious. But it was a fatality ever attending me, that this humbling im-

pression (like all other salutary impressions) was effaced by the first unpropitious circumstance that assailed me. Yet I could not help flattering myself, that I had had my full share of mortification and disappointment, and I thought it high time to enjoy that tranquillity which my youthful imagination had promised me — which I had ever been seeking, but had never found.

The Langtons were among the wisest and most prudent people under the sun. In their commonest actions they were as deliberate, as precise, and as grave, as in the most weighty affairs: every minutia was conducted by line and rule, every sentence was under the strictest discipline: of course their words were few, for they deemed it superfluous to utter a sentence without express occasion; and then, each individual word of which it was composed was the result of sober consideration. The lady, least she should commit herself, usually paused about

three seconds before she replied to a question; and to many questions of apparently trivial import, no direct reply was vouchsafed.

On my arrival it was pretty evident that not above one half of the family expected me, or knew one word about the new governess. Why should they, if there was no immediate need for it? Now, as I had taken my former resolution along with me, (notwithstanding my late rebuff) to excite sympathy and interest by the narrative of my personal history, this was a depressing stroke at the very outset; for I found Mrs. Langton as effectually hedged round by *prudence*, as Mrs. Davenport had been by pride. These ladies were equally unapproachable, and even my little charge had drunk so deeply into the same spirit, that I verily believe she had more prudence than myself. Now against prudence in the abstract I could have no rational objection; but *Prudence* ever at

my elbow, interfering with my little concerns as well as with my great ones — dictating my small talk — superintending my very looks and gestures, and dress, — was a bondage to which I had never been subjected, to which I was by no means inclined to submit; and I believe, *at that time of day*, there were some to be found who would have proved as restive under such restraints as myself.

• And now I began to doubt whether I had at all improved my condition by my late remove — but where shall an ill-regulated mind find repose? a mind habituated to call good evil, and evil good, must ever be restless and dissatisfied. Even should it be admitted that this family were really deficient in that essential prudence which would have rendered them engaging and lovely, and so have given them the power to reclaim such a character as mine — instead of inspiring me with a distaste to their virtues, by their frigid manner; — yet there is too

much reason to believe, that at this period of my life,—ignorant as I was of the world and of human nature, out of humour with myself, and therefore with all around me,—that the same restless and dissatisfied spirit would have prevailed, into whatever society I might have been introduced.

I was in a state of distressing anxiety between a vehement desire to quit this provokingly prudent family, and the dread of acquainting my father with my still unsettled feelings, when by the express desire of my mother I was summoned home. She had some weeks previously, while taking her Sunday's ride, been overturned, and had received some internal injury: that full habit, which had given her the appearance of robust health, now operated to her disadvantage. Aware of her perilous situation, she expressed an anxious desire to see me, a circumstance which excited some surprise in my father, considering the terms on which

we had lived. On my appearance at her bed-side, her agitation was such, as to render her incapable of conversing with me; nor was it till after several hours, that she became sufficiently composed and collected to utter any but incoherent sentences, to which no distinct meaning could be attached. At length, she graduall, discussed the source of her disquiet, by confessing herself to have been the principal agent in breaking off my acquaintance with William Thoroughgood; that Miss Watson was the tool she employed in the business; and Peter Patterson so far the innocent instrument of her wicked designs.

“ I wish,” continued she, “ I could say as much of him with respect to the letters!”

“ Letters!” exclaimed I, “ what letters?”

Here another paroxysm, longer and more severe than the former one, kept me in a state of the most agonizing sus-

pense. Nor, so extreme was her weakness, did the lucid interval which succeeded, afford me any hope of drawing from her the dark secret.

“ She thrice assay'd to speak; her accents hung,
And falt'ring died unfinish'd on her tongue,
Or vanish'd into sighs — with long delay,
Her voice return'd and found the wonted way.”

Then, at her desire, we were again left alone, and in detached sentences, and at tedious intervals, I was just able to collect, that Peter at one time, in the hope of winning my favour, considering my brother Richard as the principal obstacle to his design on my fortune, had intercepted (with the exception of the two first) all the letters between him and his family; together with all my father's numerous inquiries concerning him. “ And when,” added she, “ I became your mother; though he had long relinquished all hope of obtaining regard, we soon came to an understanding, and from motives of revenge, he readily assisted

me in pursuing the same plan ; for, with deep contrition I own, that it was my settled purpose, if possible, to alienate your father's affections from both his children."

And now she fixed her hollow eyes on my face, and with clenched and uplifted hands implored my forgiveness, as though her salvation had depended on it.

" Do but forgive me, Lucy !" said she, and I shall die in peace."

" Forgive you !" said I, " you have deprived me of the only two friends I possessed in the world, and what reparation have I ? "

" Indeed, I did not intend at first," said she, " to go so far — but you know, Lucy, you were always so *disrespectful to me."

This expression 'disarmed me ; and abated the paroxysm of rage into which I was rising—I beheld a fellow mortal on* the borders of eternity, stung with re-

morse, and, in her sufferings, I forgot my own wrongs.

“I do—I do forgive you!” said I; and bursting into a flood of tears, I turned and wiped her cold, bedewed face.

And now, perceiving I was more calm, she attempted to extort from me a promise of secrecy; but in this she could not prevail—the utmost I would consent to, was to keep the dark secret from my father during her life.

There are very few of my past actions which I contemplate with self-approval: but in this instance I think I may fairly record a part of my conduct, which will always yield me comfort in the retrospect. My first impulse, on these confessions of my mother, was to load her with bitter reproaches; but her bodily sufferings, her deep remorse, with the unequivocal symptoms of approaching dissolution, operated on my better feelings; and, instead of spending them in vain regrets,

or severe invectives, I employed myself in offices of unremitting tenderness and care. She expired in my arms on the fourth day after my return, and I once more found myself the mistress of my father's house.

Probably my poor mother had entertained the same opinion respecting her robust constitution that I had done; but how short-sighted are we! While I was tempted to repine, and she was saying, "My mountain stands strong," Death was distantly taking his aim — in the midst of her career she was fast approaching the period when all her selfish and ambitious schemes would be laid in the dust. "Surely man at his best estate is altogether vanity!"

But where is Peter Patterson, now more than ever the object of my hate? It was well for the peace of the house, that one roof no longer contained us — one excitement to resentful and malignant feeling, was removed from my sight

for ever. He had no sooner discovered my mother's fixed determination to expose his conduct in connexion with her own, than he decamped, and so effectually concealed the place of his retreat, as to render all my father's exertions to discover it fruitless.

I cannot describe his agitation on these fatal disclosures: resentment, grief, self-reproach, alternately possessed his mind, and rendered him for a season quite unlike himself: especially as my mother's confessions had afforded no clue by which to discover my lost brother. The letters had been destroyed; and neither her memory, nor her strength, notwithstanding my agonized and repeated endeavours, permitted her to communicate their contents.

CHAPTER VI.

THE new feelings which I saw excited in the bosom of my father, on this occasion, contributed in some degree to alleviate my distress; for they seemed to augur better days, and to exhibit home as a less dreary place than, notwithstanding my numerous privileges, I had once thought it, and had since in reality found it to be. Indeed, not having, in all my late perambulations, discovered on the whole a better, I now discerned many agreeable qualities attached to it, which, in my more flighty days, I had entirely overlooked. The propriety of contributing my endeavours towards rendering it still more comfortable, now appeared in the strongest light, that I might thereby at least preclude the necessity for my father's seeking another substitute, and

again sending me forth into a world, the difficulties of which I had no wish to encounter a second time.

I succeeded pretty well in my endeavours, and might have become tolerably placid, but that my father still retained some of his odd humours, from which, as he continued obstinately tenacious of his *own way*, I found it impossible to reclaim him: but, as he did not presume to interfere with mine, things went on better than might once have been expected.

It was, indeed, high time that I should understand and adapt my conduct to the views and habits of my father: as every year lessens, in fact, the disparity of ages between a child and a parent, it may be supposed to afford a new ground of assimilation in feelings, opinions, and tastes, and gradually induce those common sentiments which are essential to cordial intercourse.

But all my fluctuations of fortune and feeling could not entirely obliterate the remembrance of William Thoroughgood. The farm, and the tranquil days I had spent there, were subjects on which my imagination delighted to dwell. I saw nothing of the family, for our connexions were totally distinct; and the town being populous and extensive, though William Thoroughgood continued an inhabitant of it, it never happened that we came in contact. I heard, however, that he was prosperous in business, had an amiable wife, and an increasing family; and that his father, in improved circumstances, had removed to a larger farm at a distance.

I was by this time in the full prime of life, with a handsome person, and good expectations. It happened more than once or twice, that gentlemen were introduced to me who were avowedly in search of wives; but, from some cause or other, no one advanced beyond the first attentions, and I hope my veracity will

not be questioned when I declare, that, with all my advantages, William Thoroughgood was the only suitor of whom I could ever boast. Ill-natured people, who never saw me, might, among other charges, perhaps account for this circumstance by disputing my pretension to beauty, and maintain that I could *not* have been handsome; but I say *I was handsome*, and so said every body else. How far I was agreeable, is quite another question; having never been so fortunate as to hear the public opinion on that subject; and if I had, I should not think myself obliged to answer impertinent objections. However it might be with respect to any unpleasant expression on my features, I could not help thinking my father, and my step-mother, and Peter Patterson, and Mrs. Davenport, and her daughter Mary, and the Langton family, and Miss Watson, and sundry other personages — not excepting William Thoroughgood himself — fairly

chargeable with the blame of having marred my fair face, (if marred it was by any unfavourable expression,) owing to the various trials and mortifications which they had severally occasioned me; and that, therefore, the fault should in justice be laid at their door. Yet who is there that could not, if so inclined, muster a host of Misters, and Mistresses, and Misses, whose conduct towards them might be brought in extenuation of their personal disagreeableness? Yet there are some who have learned the happy art of keeping their passions under control, amid trials quite as harassing and afflictive as any of those by which I was exercised. But such happy individuals must have acquired principles of which I was at this time wholly destitute; there wanted a sovereign controlling motive in my conduct; or, to employ a strong but apt comparison, I was, under restraints or corrections, "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

The years I thus spent, alone with my father, notwithstanding his and my own manifold imperfections, I must number, now that they are past and for ever gone, among the most tranquil of my life. He showed more of parental feeling than had been manifested during my younger days, often alluding to his son Richard with deep interest and regret: this, especially, was a subject on which our feelings were in perfect unison, and it essentially contributed to mutual endearment.

Time thus imperceptibly stole away without any particular event to mark its progress, till I found myself verging towards my meridian; and by this time I began to repine occasionally at the monotonous life I lived, and seemed doomed to live. I had, it is true, a numerous, and as the world goes, an agreeable and respectable circle of friends around me; nor did I want any of the accommodations or even luxuries of life: but pleasures

derived from such sources can in their very nature only add to our real happiness, when they furnish the mere relaxations of a mind fully engaged in worthy and important pursuits: — they become positive sources of pain, and of an indescribable disgust, when they form in themselves the sole or the chief objects of life. My sickly mind was always looking out for some event to break in upon the monotony of my days; and a change, even though purchased by the loss of some of my comforts, seemed almost desirable. Such a change in my circumstances did, in fact, take place. It was one which might have been, though indeed it was not, precisely anticipated. My father, though advanced in years, was still robust, and continued nearly as active and intent on business as ever. Having rarely experienced bodily indisposition, he feared none; and despised those precautions which prudence suggested, especially at his period of life.

He had been attending the assizes,—was much heated, and returned home through a heavy rain; but, having some urgent business to transact, he omitted to change his dress:—a hazardous neglect indeed, though one to which he had accustomed himself. But the time was now come for the natural consequences to ensue:—a few days of acute suffering terminated his mortal career; and I found myself without restraint, my own mistress, and the mistress of a considerable fortune.

This was an event which, though it gave me, for the first time in my life, the full command of my own conduct, and placed me in what might be thought an enviable condition, I felt ~~should~~ by no means compensate for the loss of my only friend and sole protector—one to whose indefatigable industry and perseverance I was indebted for all my present comforts and enjoyments. I soon found, however, that that independence

in its full latitude, for which my yet unbroken spirit had been ever pining, was not to be purchased by money. Indeed, in what state can we possibly be placed, that shall render us independent of our fellow creatures? — and in how many respects are the rich still more dependent than the poor!

I had none but very distant relatives, with whom I had little intercourse, and I now took especial care that it should not become more frequent; under the idea that any attentions or civilities on their part must of necessity proceed from interested views. I determined neither to be, nor to seem to be, the dupe of any flatteries or attentions, the motive of which might be suspected; and I thought I had so perfected my natural discernment by experience, that I believed I could always detect the hidden motives of every one's conduct; and, in this pursuit, I was often, if not very charitable, at least very inge-

nious. I have since had reason to question the correctness of many of my sage surmises. Indeed, when discernment is sharpened by ill-temper, it gradually induces habits of absurd suspicion. If malignity quickens the intellectual sight, it at the same time contracts the field of vision; and, I believe, that those who have discernment without candour, are almost as apt to be mistaken in their judgments of character, as those who have candour without discernment. In fact, I overrated my knowledge of the world — I had lived, it is true, in more than one family — I had made some journeys of pleasure, and I had mixed in general society; but my mind was never tranquil enough for me to have acquired the habit of wise observation: and many who have been confined all their days to a far narrower sphere, may have exceeded me in sound practical knowledge of human nature, and of the world.

Having, among all my numerous ac-

quaintances, no attachment which deserved the name of friendship—on looking around me, and taking an estimate of my present condition, I found myself a solitary being in the midst of a world, of which I had once formed such sanguine expectations. With these melancholy feelings, I resolved to quit the busy town and its neighbourhood, and select a situation more congenial to what I imagined to be my natural taste. That I might be free from all cares, vexations, and incumbrances, I determined to board in some respectable family; and, having fixed upon a part of the country delightful in its scenery, a neighbourhood cheerful in its society, and a family unexceptionable from its general character, I adjusted my affairs, and took leave of my native town, not without some painful emotions when the parting moment arrived. When I approached my new situation, I congratulated myself, however, that I was not entering it in the dependent character of

a *governess*; and I hoped, for the support of my dignity, that the awkward secret of my having once filled that humble station, might never transpire.

The situation answered my most sanguine expectations; and I am now convinced that every thing had been done for my comfort and accommodation, that a reasonable person could have desired: besides which, I presently found myself introduced into a society much more agreeable than could have been expected in so retired a situation. But it was not perfect: I soon discerned in each individual some flaw, sufficient to damp the cordiality of friendship, and to disturb my peace. It is true, the failings I discovered were generally such, as, if they really existed, did not concern me, but were exclusively attached in their injurious effects to the individuals who indulged them, or their immediate connexions; — but I could not shut my eyes.

But it was not long before I was diverted from the painful contemplation of what was passing without doors, to more serious annoyances within. Mrs. Summers, to accommodate me, had given up her own chamber, which was spacious and convenient, and commanded an extensive prospect — indeed, it had the reputation of being the pleasantest apartment in the house ; but, unfortunately, attached to it was an enormously high stack of chimneys, which, had it been disturbed by a westerly wind, must inevitably have buried my bed under its ruins ! Now this was an objection which I could not very properly name, as (if it was valid) it could be obviated only by Mrs. Summers again placing herself in the same perilous circumstances ; — but the months of March and November increased my terrors to such a degree, that I resolved, if possible, without mentioning my real motive, to induce her to reoccupy her own apartment.

“ Mrs. Summers,” said I, “ I understand that you have given up what was always your own room, to accommodate me; I could not have suffered you to do this, if I had known of your intention before the arrangement was made, and I assure you that I shall feel much more comfortable if you will go into your own room again.”

“ By no means,” replied she, “ it is of little consequence to me where I sleep.”

“ I wonder at that,” said I, “ when you have slept there so long; it must have unsettled you very much, I should think.”

“ If it did,” said she, “ I am settled again now, and quite comfortable; and I hope you are so?”

“ Perfectly,” said I, “ perfectly; but a smaller room would suit me quite as well; — and I confess I cannot feel comfortable in deranging you in this way.”

“ My dear Miss Burrows,” said the

good lady, "I thank you for your politeness; but I request you not to say another word on the subject: I am only glad that you like your room so well."

As I had not another word ready to say on the subject, I was, for the present at least, obliged to desist, and leave the business as it stood.

Trifling as such an affair may appear, it engrossed my thoughts for a length of time: — where the mind is neither elevated by religious principle, nor occupied with any important object, it falls a prey to petty cares and imaginary anxieties.

But again the equinoctial gales began to agitate my frame, although the tall chimneys as yet continued to defy their fury. Ah! thought I, as I was shaken in my bed, and shrunk under the clothes to shield my head from the tumbling bricks, if the wind has this tremendous effect on the house, how can the chimneys stand? — They *cannot* stand; — down — down

they are coming! and I almost heard the cracking timbers of the roof and the clattering of the tiles, and began to commence my last struggles to escape, all bruised, and lacerated, and stifled (as of course I must be) from the ponderous heap of ruins.

But morning succeeded morning, and found me safe and sound at breakfast with the family, in the cheerful parlour. In proportion as the fire burned briskly, and the table talk was lively and interesting, I wondered at my nocturnal terrors, and resolved to yield to them no more; but on the approach of evening, they again revived, especially when I had ascertained the wind to be in the unpropitious corner. My inquiries were so frequent and evidently anxious on this subject, that Master Robert (Mrs. Summers's nephew) spontaneously informed me every evening in what quarter the wind was; but his arch looks, and his aunt's and cousin's simpers, when he said "It is an easterly wind, to-night, ma'am,"—"It is a

westerly wind to-night," convinced me that his pretended civility was a boyish impertinence; and at this I naturally took umbrage.

"How terribly high the wind is!—I should not wonder if it were to blow those tall chimneys down," said I to Martha, as she was attending me to bed.

"Blow the chimneys down, ma'am!" said she, "not it—they've stood it for many a long year."

"The older they are," said I, "the greater is the danger of their falling."

"Falling, ma'am!" said the girl, "I should as soon expect the sky to fall."

But I was not to be pacified by Martha's confident assertions, and resolved, if possible, to put a speedy termination to my disquiet; but not being very fertile in expedients, I found it necessary to tell Mrs. Summers plainly that I did not like my room, and wished to remove to another apartment.

"My dear Miss Burrows, what can

be the matter with the room?—is it damp
—is it cold— is it—”

“ No,” it was neither; but it did not altogether suit me, and if I might be permitted to change, I should make no objection even to one in some respects inferior.

Now all this might have done very well, had Mrs. Summers been dependent on her boarders. But, on the contrary, my being there was not only a matter of indifference to her in a pecuniary view, but I had some reason to suspect that she secretly repented of her engagement with me; her efforts at accommodation, therefore, were the result of mere courtesy. She scrupled not to say, however, that taking down and removing furniture was rather troublesome, and she did hope that this present arrangement would prove finally satisfactory to me.

And so the good lady set her people to work—not, if I might judge by appearances, in the very best mood: but upon

all such occasions, I had too much philosophy, or too much something, to regard people's sullen looks. And now I was settled in my new chamber, and felt so greatly relieved at having quitted the neighbourhood of the chimneys — and so gratified at having had *my own way*, that I made no disadvantageous comparisons between my present and my former apartment, till the impression of my supposed peril had subsided, and then I began to think that I might have continued where I was during the ensuing summer at least; for my room was certainly close and confined, and the prospect changed from distant hills and dales, and hanging woods, to that of the outhouses, which stood full in my view. Nor could the approach of winter, when the howling winds brought to my recollection all my former terrors, reconcile me to this new situation. The room was also insufferably cold, and so damp, that my clothes mildewed in the drawers. Mar-

tha's sage observation on the stability of the chimneys now appeared perfectly reasonable, and I should myself almost as soon have expected "the sky to fall," as for them to be disturbed. Under this self-inflicted trouble, I became fretful and angry; and though, even in my most unreasonable moments I could not impute blame to my polite hostess, yet she was often the object of my ill humour.

At length, no longer able to endure my present dissatisfied state, I told her plainly (for I had made up my mind to be explicit with people in future) that I wished to return into my own room again, as the one I occupied, she must well know, was not comfortable: at the same time expressing my surprise that she had not previously acquainted me with its state; for in that case, I should certainly have prevented her all the trouble she had complained of;—and I even intimated my determination to seek another home, if my wishes could not be met.

When I arrived at this part of my speech, and not before, the countenance of Mrs. Summers evidently brightened up; and she concluded the business with much good humour, by politely acceding to my proposition of seeking for myself, in some other family, the accommodations which she perceived it would not be in her power to afford me: at the same time assuring me, that her house, such as it was, should be at my service as long as it might be agreeable to myself to remain in it.

I met this unexpected reply better than I had been accustomed to encounter things of that nature, from the circumstance of my having lately been revolving in my mind the plan of commencing housekeeping; for I began to be weary of having so much to do with people; and I wondered how I could have failed to perceive that the best means of maintaining my dignity and independence, was to have an establish-

ment of my own, correspondent to my fortune and rank. I wished now that I had not quitted the house in which I was born—in which my parents had lived and died—and in which, although it had been the scene of some sorrows, I had enjoyed, or might have enjoyed, many comforts and pleasures, and indulgencies: certainly, since I had quitted it, I had found none so well disposed towards me as *some* of its old inhabitants. Now I thought that, could I recall the time, such a contemptible being as Peter Patterson should not mar all my comfort, or deprive me of the happiness of my choicest days. I questioned too, whether I might not, in some degree, at least, have conciliated my step-mother, and have disarmed her of some of her malignant feelings by a milder carriage; indeed, her dying appeal to my conscience, in reference to my behaviour towards her, forced upon me the conviction, that I had provoked much of the ill

treatment I had received. In such moments of self-reproach, methought I heard her dying voice sounding in my ears—“ You know, Lucy, you were always so disrespectful to me.” Well, but those days were past and gone;—my friends and connexions were gone;—my own youth and beauty were gone; and even the house, the scene of my joys and sorrows, was now gone, for it was disposed of, and inhabited by strangers: but the wide world was before me; was there no spot on its surface on which I might pitch my tent— and find happiness?— I resolved to try.

CHAPTER VII.

Just at this period there happened to be a house to let in the neighbourhood: as its situation was congenial to my taste, and it promised in all other respects to suit my wishes, I was soon busily occupied in fitting it up — in laying out the garden, and in purchasing furniture. I now again wished that I had been less precipitate in parting with my father's; for, beside its intrinsic value, or as I fancied, the particular adaptation of many articles to my new abode, this old furniture seemed in my recollection, all in the wide world with which my feelings were nearly allied: and if I could now have looked round upon the old chairs, and tables, the bureaus and cabinets, I should have thought myself less solitary — less desolate. But now these mementos were irrecoverably gone, and

dispersed among families who knew not us, nor valued them beyond their marketable value. It were well if this precipitancy of conduct were confined exclusively to the young and inexperienced; but I fear that what I now record of myself is not a solitary instance of that want of deliberation in mature years, which too strongly indicates immature judgment, and is usually succeeded by unpropitious results.

But during this busy period, I think, on the whole, that I was happier than I had been for many a day; with an object to interest my feelings and occupy my thoughts, I found less leisure for brooding over misfortunes, real or imaginary. I hired three female servants and a footman; and, when all was completed and ready for my reception, entered my new abode in tolerably good humour as to present circumstances, and somewhat sanguine as to the future. *

The summer passed over pleasantly; —

winter approached ; — and although I devoted as much of my time to visiting as I chose, I began to feel the many hours of solitude which it was impossible to avoid, irksome and dreary : for the time was now past with me for writing pastorals and tender ditties ; and although the world did not appear to have improved, in the least since my youthful days, I was in no mood, as formerly, to burlesque it in my song, but chose rather to animadvert on its follies in plain prose ; an amusement, however, which did not prove favourable either to my health or spirits.

But where was the mental superiority on which I had been wont to pride myself ? — I found that so far as I might actually have possessed such superiority, it had been too little improved by regular cultivation, or by a wise direction of it to some useful end, to qualify me now to depend upon my own intellectual resources for happiness, or even for amuse-

ment. It is true, I had read — read just enough to enable me to talk about it, and to make a show of my superiority over those who had not read ; but my reading had produced little salutary impression, because it was unaccompanied by reflection. I had derived no more advantage from books, than from my intercourse with the world. I was now qualified to sympathize with him who builded him houses, and planted vineyards — who made gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits : — like him, I got me servants and maidens, and I had silver and gold in abundance : but “ when I had looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do, behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun ! — therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit : — therefore I went about to cause

my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun."

" What bands of black ideas spread their wings,
The peaceful regions of content invade,
With deadly poison taint the crystal springs,—
With noisome vapours blast the verdant shade !"—

Satiated and disgusted with all that I had expected would yield me pleasure, and finding no sufficient resources in my mind, or satisfaction in the contemplation of my own character, I made some feeble efforts towards its renovation; but, destitute of that humble dependence on divine assistance, which ought to have attended my endeavours, they ended in little essential improvement: I, however, became more courteous in my carriage and manners, and was, perhaps, in some instances, even profuse and lavish in my hospitalities and civilities. Nor were the poor neglected by me: I dealt my bread to the hungry with a liberal hand; but too often forgot that precept which commands us to dispense benefits, " hoping

for nothing again." I expected, in every instance, ample returns of gratitude; and hence was exposed to continual chagrin and disappointment. I never conferred a favour without anxiously waiting for the anticipated reward, which generally fell far short of my expectations. When I dealt my bread to the hungry, I found them more intent on eating it, than on returning the expressions of their gratitude; and as if such vexations were not enough, I laboured under the habitual impression of being slighted and neglected, — imagining that my solitary situation should, in all reason, be the prominent idea with my friends, and that all their parties and engagements, and appointments, should be guided and regulated by the main object of contributing to my amusement. This feeling exposed me to continual mortifications, and kept me in a constant state of chagrin and irritation, — and all this after my late good resolutions and zealous efforts. Ah! thought

I, they are all in vain : — what can I do more ?

The cheerful blaze, the plentiful table, the commodious house, and the sociable visits of my good neighbours, (as good as neighbours usually are,) availed me nothing — and all this while the servants were as merry and happy as they could be, below "stairs. It is true, I had no longer any tall chimneys to annoy me ; but then the house was detached (I wondered I did not consider that circumstance before I hired it) : and although I had *one* man servant, it occurred to me, that he would be no defence against *two* thieves : — and so, notwithstanding bolts and bars, and chains to my doors, and bells to my windows, and a little dog in the house, and a great dog in the yard, I could seldom " lay me down and sleep in peace." I began now to repent of having left Mrs. Summers's ; and, weighing the advantages of joining the circle in a cheerful family, against what I had erroneously called a state of

independence, I found that I had greatly overrated it. All this is fairly chargeable on those provoking chimneys, thought I : and I was almost tempted to wish that there were no such things as chimneys.

To fill up the measure of my discontent, I had become infected with the spirit of religious animosity. Unhappily for the peace of the neighbourhood, some of our teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters, had been more solicitous to instil this hostile and intolerant spirit into their flocks, than to instruct them in the pure doctrines of the gospel of peace ; — thus setting every man's hand against his brother. How little can be judged from external appearances ! In yonder rural hamlet are a number of inhabitants grouped together for mutual convenience and comfort. The substantial mansion — the decent shop — the humble cottage, form a little neighbourhood, where “ the rich and poor meet together,” who ought to remember that “ God is the

Maker of them all." There rises the white spire above the trees; and beyond it, an humbler roof, devoted to the same sacred purposes. "Thither the tribes go up — the tribes of the Lord, (professedly) to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Happy would it be, would each individual go, and be reconciled to his brother, before he offer his gift: but this was by no means the case in our village; and I fear I was, at this time, to be reckoned among those "who know not what spirit they are of." I had now for some time attended what is termed an evangelical ministry; I had attained to a small degree of spiritual knowledge; and I do believe, notwithstanding all the evils of my natural temper, that I was now governed by the desire to grow in the knowledge and practice of Christianity; but this desire was yet languid — I knew little of the elevated motives of a genuine faith, and little of that deliverance from the bondage of easily be-

setting sins, with which it is accompanied. No wonder, then, if I did not discern the blessedness of those who are reviled and persecuted, and have all manner of evil spoken against them falsely for the sake of the gospel.

Years thus passed away, and, to my shame I own, left me stationary as to real happiness, and ignorant of the most effectual means of attaining it. One day, while brooding over my manifold sorrows, in a commodious apartment, by the side of a blazing fire, and with four servants at my beck, my reveries were disturbed by a sudden knock at the door: it was no sooner opened, than an elderly gentleman appeared before me.

“ Your name is Burrows, I presume, madam?” said he.

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Then,” said he, “ I am Richard!” and in an instant we were in each other’s arms.

“ Dear Richard!” said I, “ dear, dear

Richard!" and I could utter no more. It was a moment ever to be remembered; a pleasing delirium, which I am continually endeavouring to recal, till I awake, and the illusion vanishes like a summer's dream.

No sooner had our first emotions subsided, than others of a more sober nature ensued; we mutually wondered at what in reality was no wonder — the changes effected by time in our persons and manners: we gazed at each other with alternate exclamations of astonishment; yet I occasionally caught a glimpse of the Richard — the companion of my youthful days — an engaging expression of countenance, which neither years nor vicissitudes had been able entirely to obliterate. But he, in his turn, declared, that scarcely a vestige of Lucy Burrows remained. — “ Dear girl,” said he, “ you have had your sorrows, I am sure. Old Father Time, merciless as he is, has never done *all* this!” and then his lips quivered —

and I burst into a convulsive fit of weeping.

We now discussed the subject of our interrupted intercourse. He assured me that it had occasioned him the most afflictive disquietude — that he had used every possible means to discover the cause; and from his account, there appeared reason to believe, that besides those letters which had been so iniquitously intercepted, some must have mis-carried. He added, that the vicissitudes of the service, and his own immediate affairs, had at length occasioned him to desist from further inquiries, till he should again visit his native land — a period which had been protracted from time to time, beyond his expectations. The relation of his adventures, during our long separation, was reserved for future opportunities. My story was soon told: he was deeply interested and affected with the account of the death of our parents: against my step-mother he ex-

pressed a deep resentment, although I related to him but one instance of her perfidy ; yet, in the midst of his anger, he was softened by the account of her dying anguish, and his features discovered, that the amiable sensibilities of youth had not been lost in the rough discipline of life.

How different from my accustomed feelings were those with which I retired to rest on this memorable night ! For some hours I could not sleep :—at length, with a heart at ease, I fell into a tranquil slumber, and awoke in the morning quite unlike the forlorn being who had risen from the same pillow the preceding day. Oh, what a cheerful breakfast it was ! — every thing, within door and without, seemed to be changed ; so much does the aspect of external circumstances depend upon our internal feelings. Now, teasing world, thought I, your petty troubles at least shall annoy me no longer. Richard is here : from henceforth *I will* enjoy

the bounties of providence — nor, as I have done hitherto, learn their value only by their loss. —

Thus, in a few short hours, my prison was converted into a palace: the servants appeared really pleased, and I was pleased to see them participate in my happiness. Friends and neighbours poured in, and gave my brother a hearty welcome; while the village rang with the news from one end to the other. Invitations ensued in quick succession, and many weeks were spent in festivities at home and abroad, till things gradually subsided into a sober calm: the novelty had ceased, and the emotions of our friends, who at first were surprised, and amused, began to abate, — I confess I thought rather prematurely: but I was too busily employed in adjusting the house for the reception of its new master, to be much disconcerted at these things. Various alterations and improvements were now agreed upon and

adopted, for mutual accommodation and pleasure; and again I experienced the happy effect of employment. It is true, my brother and I could not exactly agree respecting some of our arrangements, and occasionally were in danger of suffering our disputes to degenerate into peevishness; but the recollection that I was *Lucy*, and that he was *Richard*, had a sort of magic influence on our feelings, and quickly put the evil demon to flight.

But when Richard's study was to be fitted up, affairs began to assume a more formidable aspect — and no wonder; for the dispute was, whether the bookcase should occupy a recess, or be consigned to a corner, to make room for a row of shelves, which he declared would be the very thing just there; — this I maintained, on the contrary, would utterly spoil the appearance of the room: and I wondered that he could not at once perceive how very snugly and compactly the bookcase would stand in that recess. But Richard

observed, that as it was his own study, it could incommode nobody to have it arranged his own way; and in this instance, he seemed determined to please himself, in a manner that I thought savoured very strongly of obstinacy. So the study was actually completed in this tasteless style, and the rest of the furniture adjusted agreeably to his own directions: he then took a journey to London for a fortnight, leaving me to superintend the completing of our plans of alteration.

No sooner was he gone, than I repaired to the study; and the more I contemplated its awkward appearance, the more I was astonished at his want of taste, and the more I longed to readjust it—although I confess it was a measure which excited some doubt and hesitation as to the propriety of it. I found it necessary, however, to bring the matter to a speedy issue, lest if I commenced my operations, I should not have time to finish

them. To let things remain as they were was an insufferable nuisance, and it actually made me nervous every time I entered the room — not that I had any occasion to enter the room ; but I was involuntarily impelled to do so almost every hour of the day, by my own inquietude. “ It is passing strange,” said I to myself, “ that my brother cannot see what I see ! ” — and I actually stamped my foot on the floor with irritation (let no one ridicule my feelings, for I have an acute recollection of them at this very moment). So, to put an end to such uneasiness, I vanquished my scruples, in the persuasion that Richard could not be *very* angry with his Lucy : and sending for the carpenter, the shelves were taken down, and the bookcase took its proper station in the recess, to my unspeakable relief and satisfaction. I was obliged, however, to be very quick in my operations, to get the room completed in time ; for he had nearly adjusted all his

shells and fossils before his departure, and as he evidently prided himself on his skill in arrangement, I found some difficulty in replacing them. I confess I was sorry that, in my hurry and eagerness, I had not taken a little more notice of their particular situation, before I ventured to remove them, for now I was obliged to proceed at random; and before I had done I became almost tired, and quite cross.

The day of his return arrived, and Richard alighted at the door with a smiling countenance;—at the sight of him I felt a sort of qualm, which it was not difficult to account for; but his accustomed open and affectionate manner presently quieted my apprehensions, and re-assured me that Richard could never be *very* angry with his Lucy. After the first salutations, and a little chat, he ordered the servant to bring in a parcel that was left in the hall; which, with very significant looks, he proceeded to un-

pack : when the last paper was removed, with a mixed expression of good-nature and self-approbation, he unfurled a beautiful piece of brocade.

“ There, Lucy ! ” said he, “ you will not be rivalled in this neighbourhood, I think : do you like it ? does the pattern please you ? ” — The pattern did *not* please me — for at that moment I had such a return of the *qualm* as must have destroyed effectually every expression of pleasure or gratitude on my countenance : however, I affected all the approbation that my feelings would allow ; and whether or not he discovered my constrained manner, I cannot tell.

He now rose to visit his study, and I followed him with anxious steps ; — he stopped short at the door, and looked round with astonishment and chagrin.

“ So, Lucy,” said he, “ you *cannot* let me alone ! Rather than have had my things so deranged, I would have given ” —

“ Why, Richard,” interrupted I, “ do but behold the improved appearance of the room! I knew you would not be convinced till you saw it.”

“ Nor am I convinced now,” said he. “ I only know that it employed me several days to arrange those things to my mind: besides, the fossils were classed scientifically, and now that they have been all mingled, it will be very difficult to restore them to their places. You can have no conception how much you have vexed me!”

“ You are not more vexed than I was to see the room so spoiled.”

“ But you were not obliged to see it; — you were not wanted here. Will you permit me to readjust your dressing-room?”

“ Well,” said I, “ it is really surprising to see you so disconcerted about a mere trifle.”

He made no reply; but rung the bell violently. “ Tell the carpenter,” he said

to the servant, “ to be here to-morrow morning without fail.”

“ My dear sister,” said he, as he left the room, “ I allow you to call these things trifles: but let us learn not needlessly to oppose each other’s wishes in such affairs; and we shall prevent a thousand occasions on which our harmony may be disturbed.”

“ And all this,” muttered I, as I left the study, “ about the derangement of a few insignificant shells and fossils!”

Although it could not strictly be said that this little disagreement generated either hostile conduct or hostile feelings, — for the cloud soon passed away, yet it introduced a habit of jarring and disputing on the most trivial occasions, illustrating the truth of that divine aphorism — “ That the beginning of strife is like the letting out of water.”

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the emotions excited by the above unpropitious circumstance had tolerably subsided, I felt myself in duty bound to appear in my new brocade. This was repugnant to my feelings, because, connected with my religious views, were certain notions, which, on subsequent consideration, I now believe to be unsupported by Scripture. I had been led to question the lawfulness of those enjoyments which my circumstances and rank in life might seem to warrant, and instead of receiving the bounties of Providence with gratitude, to turn from them with disapprobation and disgust. I am not sure, had not the arrival of my brother occasioned a temporary diversion to my feelings, if I should not have disengaged my conscience of all such super-

fluous appendages, and surrendered myself to the rigid habits of a recluse. During this period of morbid feeling, I believe that when dressing for a social party, I have surveyed myself in the glass with as much complacency at the forlorn figure I cut, as the gayest damsel in the circle could have done at her own graceful person and elegant attire; and probably too, felt an equal portion of satisfaction, when I perceived my homely appearance had attracted attention: not sufficiently aware how nearly allied was this temper to malignant feeling — to that insulting and vaunting spirit which says, “Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou;” a spirit which can secretly enjoy the silent reproaches thus designedly dealt about among friends and neighbours.

In this mood — but to avoid an alteration with my brother, on a subject on which I knew we must be ever at va-

riance, I suffered him to see me set out to join a numerous party, dressed in my new brocade. As it afterwards happened, I was very glad that he was prevented by a prior engagement from accompanying me. The novelty of my dress—so different from my usual appearance, naturally attracted attention ; and some of the ladies ventured to extol the elegance of the pattern. This was the very thing I wished for, as it afforded me a fresh opportunity of declaiming on the vanity and sinfulness of external ornament.

“ It is my brother’s present, I assure you,” said I, “ for I cannot afford to spend so much on my person, while so many fellow-creatures are crying in my ears for bread.”

“ I am sorry for that,” observed Mr. Blandford, who had hitherto appeared to take no interest in what was passing.

“ Sorry for that!” said I, “ are you sorry, sir, that I prefer relieving the dis-

tressed, to decorating my person with expensive ornaments?"

"I am only sorry," replied he, "that you cannot afford to do both."

"Well, sir," said I, "who would have expected this from you? Are we not expressly forbidden 'to let our adorning be that of gold and pearls, and braiding of the hair?'"

"I confess," said he, "if there is such a prohibition in Scripture, I have hitherto mistaken its meaning; and in the text to which you allude, as *apparel* is included in the catalogue, the passage, literally taken, would strip us of our necessary clothing. No: I conceive this solitary text, rather as an exhortation to give our preference to personal piety, than a direct prohibition of external ornament."

"Well," said I, "interpret Scripture as you please; but the question still remains — how can professors of religion consistently indulge in superfluities, while

so many of their poor neighbours literally want necessaries? You are not unacquainted, for instance, with the distressed circumstances of John Simms— you probably know that he has been lately discharged because his master at the present juncture cannot find him employ, and he has a wife and six children. Now, how can I spend one superfluous shilling with such a distressing case before my eyes?"

" I am glad that you have mentioned this case," replied Mr. Blandford, " because it affords me an opportunity of defending my conduct, when it is known that at this very time I am employing my leisure in making the design for a bridge, which I mean to throw over the little rivulet at the bottom of my grounds; and by employing this man in erecting it, I conceive myself to be rendering him the most essential service, by enabling him to supply his own wants, and thereby maintaining habits of industry, as well as a

feeling of independence. Call it a superfluity, if you please ; but I am sure, that whenever I cross the brook, or survey the picturesque effect of my little bridge from a distance, my conscience will never reproach me for the misapplication of money, as if it might have been better applied. Be it remembered, that numberless articles which certainly could be done without, furnish employ for thousands, and thereby procure them bread which *cannot* be done without."

" Do you think, sir," said I, " that the saints of old used to argue thus ?"

" I believe," replied he, " that I could refer you to very remote periods of sacred story in support of these sentiments ; but to go no further back than the reign of Solomon—had the moderate use of what you call luxuries, been prohibited, do you think that the inspired writer would have been so very circumstantial in detailing the riches and glory of that monarch, from the lions which decorated the steps

of his throne, to the superfluous apes and peacocks imported from foreign lands, expressly stating that all these appendages of royalty were bestowed as *rewards* for his exemplary piety?"

"Yes," said I; "but under that dispensation, most of the pomp then allowed, was typical of spiritual blessings."

"It seems strange, however," replied he, "that these spiritual blessings should be shadowed forth by criminal indulgences: however, to avoid the charge of arguing as though there was no New Testament, as some do, as though there was no Old Testament—sufficient for our purpose might be gleaned from this also;—though it would be difficult to find a passage in which our Lord himself alludes to the subject at all—not one, I believe, in the way of prohibition. He had a much more important work to do: in the mean time, he scrupled not to conform to the common usages of mankind, (of which we have a variety of instances)

plainly indicating, of what small importance he esteemed those things. Nor does the apostle enjoin *us* to wander about in sheep skins and goats' skins, and to live in dens and caves of the earth, when he so affectingly describes the case of those who were persecuted for their profession — because he represents such homely garbs and mean accommodations as real evils, afflictive and tormenting, and not to be voluntarily encountered, but from necessity, and when imperious duty required it."

"Nothing is easier," said I, "than so to interpret Scripture, as to make it accord with our own prejudices and inclinations."

"Nothing easier," replied he: "but does not the book of nature speak in the same strain? The beneficent Creator made nothing in vain; and pronounced of all his works when finished — that they were very good: — good for what? — good for nothing, if not to be used. In

a moral sense, it is true, we are doomed to wander in a howling wilderness — a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; but in a natural view, we inhabit an exceeding good land — a land flowing with milk and honey, obviously designed for our refreshment as we pass through it: instead then, of ungratefully bringing up an evil report of it, let us rather join the Psalmist in that sweet song of praise, ‘ The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered with corn, they shout for joy, they also sing.’ Surely he was not indulging so gloomy a view of things when he penned this devout eulogium.”

“ And well is it,” said I, “ when we have as high a zest for those better blessings, of which these are but faint shadows! Surely, sir, you will not deny that the most eminent saints have professed the principles, and adopted the conduct, for which I now contend.”

“ Nor do I wish to deny it,” replied

he ; “ but your argument is completely neutralized by the fact, that the professions and practice of many more, equally eminent for piety, have not sanctioned these principles. Nevertheless, those who choose to take on them the vow of the Nazarite, shall remain unmolested by me ; provided they allow the same latitude to their Christian neighbours, from the conviction that, were all Nazarites, the interests of society must be annihilated.”

“ It might be well if the number were increased, however,” said I.

“ Possibly : but, in the mean time, let not the really conscientious have to complain of their more rigid brethren, and say, ‘ we did but taste a little honey, and now we must die,’ — die in their esteem, and be dubbed sensualists and worldlings, for the moderate use of what we believe to be the free gifts of Providence.”

“ But what, sir, do you say to that

Scripture which expressly enjoins us to 'mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts?'"

"I would say," replied he, "that I hope it is ~~my~~ sincere desire thus to bring my own body into subjection; but at the same time, while I am solicitous not to take away one jot or tittle from the words of this book; so neither would I incur the guilt of adding thereto by a strained interpretation. I conceive, then, its meaning to be, that we should deal with the flesh as a master by his servants — as a father by his children — as a monarch by his subjects. The one, while he beareth not the sword in vain, but for the punishment of evil doers, (and only such) should at the same time be a guardian and protector of the natural rights of his people: the other correcteth his children, not needlessly or wantonly, but from necessity, and when their welfare requires it; and the former dealeth with those under him, not as a hard master,

but giveth them that which is just and equal."

"Very considerate to the flesh, truly," exclaimed I.

"Why," said he, "I have somewhere read that no one hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it."

"Well, sir, then here is an end to cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes."

"On the contrary," said he, "I believe our conflicts with the flesh will never terminate on this side the grave; and if we confine ourselves to the mortification of our members, *when they offend*, we shall not long want employ; but when *they do not offend*, must we then mar and amputate? Ah, Miss Burrows! this rigid withdrawing from the common enjoyments of life, is in my opinion paying them too great a compliment, as though we felt them too captivating to trust ourselves within their reach: perhaps a moderate use of the creatures may

be the best proof, after all, of our not estimating them too highly. It must not be inferred that we mean to relinquish our journey, because we soberly partake of refreshments on the road. I do not perceive that the first licence given to man by his Creator has been ever revoked:—‘ Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.’ Only now, as heretofore, there is one prohibition annexed, ‘ Use the world as not abusing it.’ This is only the case when it so engrosses our time and our thoughts, that the important concerns of our souls, the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and the necessities of our fellow-creatures, are sacrificed to it; which, alas! is too generally the case: but that does not affect the argument.”

“ I fear, sir,” said I, “ that this would be thought, by some, to savour too strongly of that conformity which you affect to condemn.”

“ I believe it is my earnest desire, at

least," replied he, " not to conform to the world in the sense you mean ; and I firmly believe too, that there is many a sincere Christian travelling towards Zion, with his face stedfastly set thitherwards, although he have no shell in his hat : nevertheless, to those of my fellow travellers who choose to wear the pilgrim's habit, I can cordially say ' God speed ! ' they have my free permission to gall their own flesh with their garb of horse-hair, provided they do not elbow, and rub, and chafe me with it."

Here I bit my lip ; but he proceeded : — " It is possible for those who render themselves conspicuous in the world by their personal austerities, and even by their general benevolence, to go to the contrary extreme of that conduct censured by our Lord ; — while doing the weightier matters of the law, they neglect the mint, and the annis, and the cummin, — some of the loveliest plants in the garden of human nature, if we may bor-

row the simile, to illustrate those minor virtues, which are real embellishments to the Christian character. Some of those, at least, who are perched on an eminence, for the crowd to gaze at, might do well to apply the remaining sentence in its reversed sense, to their own use:—
‘These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.’ For, alas! such outward and visible signs do not *always* indicate inward and spiritual grace; they may, indeed, attract public notice, and astonish the superficial observer, but with the intelligent and reflective portion of mankind *they will not do.*’

“Well, sir,” said I, “this is indeed reversing the divine precepts.”

“So far from making void the law,” said he, “I hope my aim is to establish it, by complying with its obvious meaning, as far as I can discern it. I believe its language still to be, ‘Rend your hearts, and not your garments;’ and while

it is also declared, that ‘ it is not what goeth into a man that defileth him,’ we may safely conclude, I think, that neither our food nor our raiment are the main objects of divine regulation. ‘ To the law and to the testimony:’—and, in my humble opinion, we should employ ourselves to much better purpose, in studying its genuine spirit, than in selecting certain favourite characters of our own as models for ourselves, and as standards whereby to judge of the conduct of our neighbours.”

“ But,” said I, “ waiving this part of the subject—what is your opinion of luxuries, sir, as they affect the interests of society?—are they a good, or an evil?—are they not chargeable with having accelerated the decline and downfall of empires?”

“ My good lady,” said he, “ let us take care that we do not get out of our depth: many concurrent circumstances have occasioned these mighty revolu-

tions—and no doubt luxuries have contributed their full share: but I fear they have taken too firm hold now, for you and me, and all the well meaning people that could be mustered, to make any material difference."

"And so," added I, "we must swim with the stream."

"Swim with the stream," said he, "with a good pilot to direct our course,—the word of God. But I should be glad to hear your definition of that favourite term, *luxury*."

"I should think," said I, "that what is not properly a *necessary*, comes under that description."

"I think so too," said he; "but a further definition of what are called *necessaries* must be added, to settle the dispute. For my own part, I deem them both most indefinite terms, depending entirely on individual circumstances. For instance, should our poor neighbour Simms, at the present juncture, allow

himself a plain shoulder of mutton, perhaps he might be justly charged with indulging in a luxury. The same argument will apply through all gradations of society; indispensable necessaries to some, (if appearances must be supported and respectability maintained,) are luxuries to others, who have neither such demands or means."

"Respectability, however, ought not to depend on external appearances," said I.

"Nor does it depend on them," replied he, "yet it is unavoidably influenced by them. But now, Miss Burrows, permit me to take another view of the subject — that of the conversion of heathen lands."

"Which," said I, "should be the object of our fervent prayers and strenuous endeavours?"

"But," said he, "on your principle, here is a grand objection; for religion brings civilization, and luxuries tread close on

its heels. You would rejoice that the neat village should be erected on the ruins of the Hottentot kraal; but the next step would be, that the enlightened inhabitant would feel wants and crave comforts, which his ancestors had done very well without — very well for all the purposes of mere existence. — Emerging from his savage state, he raises all his energies, and exerts all his ingenuity, to supply them; and where will this terminate? Shall we attempt to set bounds, and say 'hitherto shalt thou go, and no further?' — shall we draw the line for him, between necessaries and superfluities? The attempt would be vain. Man is a progressive creature: the increasing wants of civilized man will stimulate his exertions, and eventually lead to excess: but it is now too late to drive him back into his primitive habits; his appetite, once roused, may be regulated — it cannot be extinguished; and the attempt would be as injurious as vain."

“ Well, sir,” said I, “ who would have expected to find in *you* so zealous an advocate for luxuries ?”

“ I am glad,” replied he, “ that you have discerned nothing in my conduct to warrant the supposition, that I should be a zealous advocate for luxuries, simply as such; but, in the present state of society, were there an entire revolution in public feeling, it could produce no beneficial result: quite the contrary to the artizan, the manufacturer, the merchant, should their scrupulous neighbours, after all their toil and hazard, leave their commodities on their hands. No: we must not level the buildings, and plough up the streets of our populous towns and cities, to grow corn and graze cattle in, unless we would have two or three generations of our posterity famished during the progress of the experiment. I repeat, therefore, that it is our duty, in a certain degree, to conform to the state of the times; and this I think may be done, without incurring

the imputation of that conformity to the world, which we are enjoined to avoid."

" We may be perfectly easy," said I, " on that score; for the profuse habits of the generality of people would effectually support the interests of trade and commerce, if that is all."

" There can be no question on that subject," replied he; " nor would the interests of society require your opinion to be combated, because, indeed, there are so very few at all disposed to adopt it, were it not that where it does prevail, it is so apt to engender a censorious spirit. But all this is nothing to the purpose; nor does it at all affect the question — whether the moderate use of luxuries, however they may be abused by many, is in itself right or wrong?"

" After all," said I, looking down contemptuously on my dress, " I cannot yet be reconciled to my brocade."

" I cannot help that," said he; " but I recollect that I once saw an immense

crowd of famished Spitalfield weavers, going up to petition the Queen to appear at court in a new invented embroidered stuff: they met with a gracious reception; nor should I have envied the being who could have witnessed their triumphant return with disapprobation or indifference; the air resounded with joyful acclamations, and hope reanimated every pallid countenance; nor were their hopes disappointed. From court and the higher circles, the fashion naturally descending through the middle ranks, to the inferior orders, then disappeared, after having afforded relief to hundreds of starving families. And if not one in a thousand thought of the Spitalfield weavers, when she was decking her fair person in the embroidered stuff, the benefit was real. Yet you would have averted your eyes from the spectacle, and at one stroke have deprived a poor weaver of a meal, and your less scrupulous neighbour of her Christian character, for what you

would have termed her criminal compliance with the fashions of the world!"

"Why, I confess, sir, that the gratification of affording immediate relief to the distressed, would have been more congenial to my feelings, than that of wearing the fashionable stuff."

"That is to say," replied he, "you scruple not to deprive the poor man of the privilege of independence. Indeed, madam, I fear your principles would not abide the test: surely this is a narrow mode of thinking; and though I agree with you, that there is little probability of such sentiments becoming general; yet as far as they do obtain, they are really baneful."

"Not so baneful, sir," said I, "as the prodigality and dissipation visible on every side; can we look abroad without witnessing the most flagrant instances of them?"

"Then, my good lady," said he, "we will not look abroad, but *at home*; espe-

cially as we cannot materially remedy the evil, (at least by your plan) we might as well leave our neighbours to dress and dine as they please — to settle their own expenses, and balance their own accounts. Perhaps even some of those included in our censures, may really have a reasonable prospect of paying honestly for their luxuries: and till the contrary appears, I shall suspend *my* anathemas, even although what they devote to a better cause should seem to bear too small a proportion; lest in my sweeping censures, I should happen to condemn some, who ‘let not their right hand know what their left hand doeth.’ There will come a day, when these things will not be left to human caprice or conjecture, but will be settled according to the rules of immutable justice.”

“ I think, sir,” said I, “ there is little danger of mistaking a worldly spirit, however.”

“ A worldly spirit is, indeed, generally

stampt on the forehead in characters legible enough," replied he; " and it behoves Christians to be exceedingly watchful, lest their too earnest attention to secular concerns, and their complacency in allowed enjoyments, should give occasion, either to the friends or the enemies of religion, to question their sincerity: but let us remember that there are secret breathings and devout aspirations of many a soul, amid the busy concerns of life, which reach no human ear."

During this conversation, Mr. Blandford was repeatedly cheered by expressions of approbation, and myself as often assailed with "There, Miss Burrows!"—and, "There, Miss Burrows!" by several of the young ladies, as well as some of the elder ones; and at the conclusion, a general murmur of applause and triumph ran through the company.

"Stop, ladies! stop!" cried the good man, looking around with an expression of surprise, "I confess I am not so ob-

stinate a disputant — not so tenacious of my own opinion, as to have been particularly displeased, had I encountered another antagonist, or two, at least, among this gay circle. Indeed, I should be deeply concerned to find that the expression of my sentiments this evening, had led any one of my fair auditory astray: for the errors of Miss Putrows (if such they are) after all, incline on the safe side, or rather on the *safest*, for no error, strictly speaking, can be safe: and we should avoid turning aside to the *right* hand as well as to the *left*. Be it remembered, however, although I do not conceive the passage on which this lady lays so much stress, to be a direct prohibition of personal ornament — that nevertheless, braiding of the hair, and gold, and pearls, are not the things (however allowable in themselves) which are accounted “in the sight of God of great price;” and her motives would be very questionable, who, under pretense of encouraging industry,

and promoting the public weal, should lavish on her own person what is evidently due to the immediate calls of humanity, and the interests of religion. It is a sad sign, when all the zeal and energy of the female character seems to be concentrated in one object, personal decoration, under any pretence whatever. Those who are conscious of such a dangerous propensity, would do well to examine carefully their own hearts, and then yield to the conviction, that they will ultimately be judged, not so much for their actions, as from the secret motives from whence they spring."

Mr. Blandford paused for a moment, and looked around, probably in the hope of some expression of assent to his remarks: he then proceeded.

" I have only to repeat, ladies, that while I believe we may lawfully avail ourselves of both nature and art, for our comfort and enjoyment; an inordinate attachment to the things of this lower

world is not compatible with the Christian character — it is “ the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience. The mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,” may be as really destructive to the spiritual life, as the sword and the spear to the natural existence. I should hope that these opposite views of the subject may qualify, without neutralizing each other.”

Thus did Mr. Blandford afford each of us a subject for reflection ; but none for triumph. For my own part, not having as yet vanquished my constitutional infirmity, or made any essential progress in the art of yielding, I afforded my friend no plausible reason to boast of his having shaken my opinion by the force of his arguments. It is true, I could *talk* (as many others do) of “ cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes,” and certainly I could have restricted myself daily to half a meal — I could neglect my person, to the great annoyance of

my brother, when we appeared abroad together, and in spite of his remonstrances, which I called “persecution for conscience sake:”— all this I *could do*; but to say, “you are right, and I am wrong;” to acknowledge an error—a trivial mistake, to a fellow mortal, was the thing I *could not do*— that was an operation from which I always shrank, because it gave me real pain; a proof of the little progress I had made in the virtue of mortification, and how unskillful an operator I still continued to be, when I could thus overlook or neglect members that were really diseased, and leave them to fester and gangrene.

This conversation, however, had its secret and remote influence: but the time was not yet come for me to have a correct view of things; I still remained a stranger to the world, to human nature, and to myself.

CHAPTER IX.

My brother's constitution had suffered from the effects of long and severe service, under a burning sun: he had scarcely seated himself beside me on the first day of his arrival, before I observed the tremulous motion of his hand, and other symptoms, that betrayed the invalid. In consequence of this, his naturally sweet and engaging temper was occasionally obscured by peevishness and irritability; yet he was so radically amiable, that had his little infirmities even been humoured, instead of thwarted, I now verily believe (now that it is too late) the probability of his regaining a degree of health would have been much greater. I was so intent on his good, that often I did not perceive I was putting him to the torture; and strangely imagined, that his well-being, present

and future, greatly depended on my curbing and thwarting what I called his whims; but *this* sort of discipline was more than half a century too late.

It was natural that he should seek company and amusements; but from his early education, and subsequent habits, his selection of companions did not at all accord with my present views. He soon formed connexions with the sporting gentlemen of the neighbourhood; though unable to join in the exercises of the field, he loved the company of those who did, and had occasional parties of them at the house,—a thing to me truly burdensome and oppressive: consequently, I never treated his friends with that courtesy which my brother had a right to expect; especially as his behaviour was invariably polite and respectful to my visitors. How lamentable, that in such instances as these, the men of the world should be seen to conduct themselves with more good temper and pro-

priety, than those who would be thought the children of light! What happy effects might have been produced on this dissipated character, by a different life of conduct on my part! but, alas! "zeal was not according to knowledge." I can, however, record a few exceptions.

For some time previous to his arrival, I had introduced the practice of family prayer; and I courageously determined that this unexpected circumstance should not interfere with my duty; resolving to give place, "no, not for an hour," to what might have been urged as an excuse, I assembled the servants as usual, the very first evening, and went boldly through the service: he appeared surprised and embarrassed; and, as soon as we were alone, he exclaimed, "Why, Lucy, have you turned Methodist?" "I hope, brother, I have turned Christian," said I. And from that time he never more accosted me on the subject; but was absent or present at the time, as it

happened to suit his convenience. However unedifying my religious profession might be, it would certainly have gained nothing by a want of consistency and firmness in this instance. I therefore recollect the circumstance with thankfulness, that I was enabled to maintain my ground, and so far evince by my conduct, that "I was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." I would hope, that even at this time of which I am speaking, my lately adopted principles were not wholly without their proper influence on my conduct; but, alas! how lamentably was this small portion of grace obscured by that unhappiness of temper, of which even bitter experience had not yet taught me the deep and serious evil! I had none of the spirit of the apostle, who became "all things to all men," that he might win souls to Christ. On the contrary, I fear that the manner in which I attempted to recommend religion, operated with my brother in a way directly con-

trary to my intentions. Believing him to be entirely destitute of it, I thought it my duty plainly to tell him so; but, my plain dealing, I fear, had more the air of anger than of seriousness:— I treated religion like a matter of personal disagreement between us; and though a good intention might prompt me to say what I said, there was commonly more of asperity than of meekness and charity in those thundering appeals to his conscience, by which I attempted to produce conviction. I forgot the exhortation to brotherly kindness, long-suffering, and all those milder virtues and graces which ornament the Christian character, and cause those “ who see our good works, to glorify our Father who is in heaven.”

Yet, notwithstanding the discordance of our principles and natural dispositions, our mutual attachment, I am sure, continued unabated. Strange, that I should have no more command over the ebulli-

tions of my temper, with this habitual conviction on my mind! that I could on no occasion yield one particle of my own present convenience, or waive an opinion on the ~~merest~~ trifle, in compliance to that being whom I valued beyond all the world! All my goodness seemed to consist in resolves for *to-morrow*; but against the assaults of *to-day* I was ever unprepared. That I was myself not altogether exempt from whims and unreasonable caprices, my preceding history pretty clearly evinces, — and Richard could see them; but he was neither rigid nor severe in noticing or opposing them; so long as he could have his own way, he was indifferent as to the rest, and well contented that I should have mine: he seldom retorted upon me, as he might very fairly have done, had he been so inclined; and it was well that he did not, because it must have led to endless recriminations.

‘But which of all my whims and ca-

prices could be named in comparison with his requiring me to drop *nine drops* of rum into a glass of water for him every night, immediately before he retired to his room! I objected to it from the very first, as a most unreasonable and ridiculous custom. "Lucy," said he, "my hand shakes so of late, that I cannot do it myself, or I would not trouble you; and now I *cannot* give it up, for I have taken it these seven years."

"Then," said I, "permit me to say, that you have taken it seven years too long."

Still he went on to insist on it most peremptorily, as actually essential to his night's repose. *Nine drops of rum in a glass of water*, neither more nor fewer, for he maintained that he could ascertain the exact quantity to a single drop! Now I would rather have walked or run nine times up and down stairs every night, and the same every morning — or what would have been

still worse, have had nine of his jovial companions to dinner,—than perform a service so irrational and slavish. So after sundry reasonings and expostulations, and occasional sallies of wit had been resorted to ineffectually, (in which so much had been said, that nothing new remained to say)—I determined to brave his irritability, and put in the quantity at random, though I will do myself the justice to add, that I aimed at as accurate a guess as possible: but at such perpetual slavery to a ridiculous whim, my reason (as I thought), or my temper, revolted. Not for a single day, or month, or year, but to the end of life, if I now yielded, should I be doomed every night to the intolerable drudgery of pouring nine drops of rum into a glass of water!—with less it would be chilling — with more it would taste of the spirit! and so a dispute, often amounting to what some people might have called a downright quarrel, was, of the two evils, in my opinion, to

be preferred ; and it became so habitual, that at length we regularly sat down to supper in full array for the onset.

I am not sure that if the whole time thus occupied had been employed in measuring rum by single drops, it would have had a more injurious effect on my nerves, than these periodical altercations, which invariably quickened my pulse, and excited such irritation, as to banish sleep from my eyes for several hours ; besides the time I repeatedly devoted, when alone, to measuring the obnoxious draught with the utmost exactness, for the mere purpose of ascertaining, to my own satisfaction, the inadequacy of this small quantity of spirit to produce the least effect on the water. Not to mention the ill effects evidently produced on my brother by these repeated altercations, to whose health, peace and tranquillity seemed essentially necessary ; but all such considerations, under immediate provocation, were forgotten.

Surely those who maintain an habitual hostility to *whims*, should take especial care that they have none of their own ; and at the same time consider, that the indulgence of a mere whim or caprice, in a nervous invalid, may contribute more to his real comfort, than many an important service which would be cheerfully rendered him.

“ Come,” said I, one evening, when my brother’s fretfulness on the subject had exceeded the usual bounds, “ you love to tell us of your valour, and your brave exploits; but remember, that ‘ he who ruleth his spirit, is greater than he who taketh a city.’ ”

“ Yes,” said he, “ and there are those who can boast of having done neither the one nor the other.”

So saying, he rose, and left the room in great irritation.

The next morning he did not appear at breakfast : all alarm, I hastened to his

chamber, and tenderly inquired if he was unwell.

"I do not feel quite the thing," said he; "but let me alone, and I shall probably be up by dinner time."

He was up — but evidently disordered; he had no appetite, and his cheeks were alternately pale and flushed. Tortured by fears and self-reproach, I believe I oppressed him with officious tenderness: he seemed to retain no resentful feelings, but became so rapidly ill before night, as to need medical assistance. The disorder, however, continued to baffle all our endeavours. My pen here fails to depict the torture of my mind. What sacrifice would I not have made — what sufferings would I not have endured, to have protracted his life but a few more weeks? — long enough to have afforded me another opportunity of evincing the sincerity of my affection, by uniform kindness, and such attentions to

his innocent caprices, as a brother so loving and so beloved had a right to claim.

I approached his bed with a glass:—
“Here is your water,” said I, “dear Richard, with just *nine drops* in it. I assure you it is exact: perhaps it will refresh you.”

He wanted it not: I knew he did not: yet I raised his head, and applied it to his parched lips! but, oh! his clay-cold hand, as he attempted to guide it, struck a chill to my heart. I felt that very few more of my officious services would be needed. I hung over him with all the yearnings of tenderness and despair.

“I *do* love you, dear Richard,” said I. “I *do* love you: you believe that I do?” — but he spake not, neither regarded.

“Only let me know that you believe it,” continued I, “by just raising your hand.”

At that moment there was a slight motion of the hand; but I have never

been able to ascertain whether it was an involuntary movement, or in compliance with my request. No day passed for many succeeding months, in which I did not torture my recollection, if possible to establish the fact; and, occasionally, to this very hour, I cannot avoid dwelling on the scene, in the vague hope of extracting that particle of consolation from it; although every day increases the difficulty, and renders the image I attempt to pourtray, more and more indistinct.

Hitherto I had used no reserve with my brother on the subject of religion; often, indeed, introducing it without regard to the fitness of the time or occasion. Now the moment was come, when to introduce it was eminently proper: but now, conscious of the harshness with which I had always administered my religious admonitions, and remembering the low degree in which I had honoured my profession in his eyes, I feared that my inter-

ference would tend only to aggravate his unhappy prejudices. Thus I shrunk from my duty, and suffered him to leave the world without hearing one sentence relating to his immortal concerns, although as often as I approached his bed, the all-important subject quivered on my lips. Hence the sorrow I felt at the death of my brother, was further aggravated by a poignant anguish that long threatened my own life.

On the evening of that day week on which we had our last memorable altercation, my dear long-lost brother quitted this mortal scene; and left me one of the most disconsolate of human beings. Deaf to the soothing voice of friends, I retired to my chamber, threw myself on the bed, and sunk into one of those heavy sleeps, to which I was constitutionally subject when oppressed with extraordinary sorrow :

• “ For there’s a lethargy in mighty woe.”

But on what a morning did I open my eyes ! With the light of day, what harrowing recollections burst on my mind ; what a contrast to that cheerful morning (the brightest that ever shone on my head) after the arrival of my dear brother ! Then I felt a satisfaction — a security — a heart at rest, which I would not have bartered for an empire. It seemed to my present feeling, a brighter sun than ever gilded even my youthful days ; — I might have exclaimed, “ My cup runneth over, I have more than heart can wish : ” but now the house resumed its dreary gloom — it was again a prison, and every apartment in it served only to remind me of former happiness, and to aggravate present misery.

The world is not so bad, but that extraordinary suffering will generally awaken the feelings of sympathy, and call forth the kind offices of some of our fellow-creatures : my neighbours now assembled

around me; and, among them, some whom I had been used to think insensible to my civilities, ungrateful and unfeeling, were the first to sympathise with my affliction ; they endeavoured to direct me to the true source of consolation — that which the Gospel affords to sufferers of every description ; but at present I was deaf to its soothing voice, and chose rather to abandon myself to every thing that might aggravate my sorrow, and feed my despair. Dwelling on the happiness I had recently enjoyed (or might have enjoyed) in my brother's society, I delighted to wander over the rooms which he had most frequented, and to sit where he had sat : but the study was my favourite retreat, where the bookcase and the shelves were sure to excite all the luxury of grief. Nor did I forget to open my drawer, and display the rich brocade, now to be worn no more. " No," said I, " the sable garb with which I am clad, shall enwrap this bosom so long as it

continues the abode of anguish and self-reproach ; and that will be till it ceases to heave : ”

And now a state of extreme debility ensued, and kept my life in suspense for many successive weeks ; during which time, I have ever to remember the persevering and unwearied kindness of my neighbours and friends, some of whom are now gone to receive the reward of Christian love. Among those to whose kind attentions I stood indebted, under Providence, for my recovery, was the sprightly Mary Littleton, a girl of whom I had never augured well, on account of her coquetry, flirting, and a thousand faults, which my penetration had discovered ; and which, in my opinion, rendered her altogether an unpromising character. Yet, this very girl suspended these evil propensities, (if they really did exist,) and attended me with unremitting kindness and care. On recovering once from a swoon, I found her arm encircling

me, my head reclining on her bosom, and her rosy good-natured face contemplating me with compassion and sympathy. Well, thought I, surely I must have been mistaken in some of my harsh conjectures! how could I pretend to know others, when, alas! I fear I have been miserably ignorant of myself?

The complacency which I began to feel towards those around me, was one of the first symptoms of convalescence; but like the sun gleaming through a cloud on a stormy day, they were succeeded by dreary fits of gloom and despondency. At length I was able to leave my chamber; but the sight of the deserted apartments had again nearly overcome me, when the same friendly offices interposed, which I had lately experienced. Surely, thought I, this must be pure benevolence; for I am conscious that my character has not hitherto been so engaging, as to call forth all this kindness and sympathy: and then I offered a fervent prayer, "Turn me,"

• said I, “ and I shall be turned ; say to these evil passions, to which I have ever been the slave, Peace, be still ! and let me experience that calm, which the world cannot give. Thou hast taken away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke. Oh ! take not thy Holy Spirit from me ; but cheer my benighted soul with the light of thy countenance ! ”

Thus the fallow ground was broken up — the seed scattered, the dew descended and the gentle rain, as on the new mown grass ; and shall no fruit appear ? How shall this hitherto barren spot yield even its thirty fold, while the seeds of so many noxious plants yet remain, and lie deep in the ground ? Who is sufficient for these things ? Alas ! I am not, for I still find that “ when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

I now viewed my habitation as neither the prison nor the palace of an immortal creature ; for I began to contemplate with a new interest “ that house not made

with hands, eternal in the heavens ;" — more deeply convinced, that " here having no continuing city," it was high time for me " to seek one to come." In this frame of mind, the society of those whose views of the great business of life were like my own, became increasingly agreeable to me ; for I was now, in some degree, more disposed to admire and emulate their graces, than as formerly to censure their failings, and bear hard on their infirmities. They saw and rejoiced in the change, and forgetting what they must have heretofore disapproved, associated with me in Christian fellowship. So does the spirit of christianity, as far as it operates, render " crooked places straight, and rough places plain." So does it make " the lion to lie down with the lamb." .

But as sorrow was not yet banished from my bosom, so human infirmity still evinced that my spiritual progress consisted rather in desires, than in attain-

ments. A fretful, restless, and discontented temper, is seldom absolutely reformed late in life; and I occasionally gave proofs of the inveteracy of the malady.

Feeling more forcibly than I had ever done before the return of my dear brother, that it was not good to be alone, I resolved to seek a companion, if one could be found, in every respect unexceptionable. A striking instance of my not having rectified all my mistakes, and of a very partial knowledge of the world, was my rigid requirements in the person I should select for this honourable post. I had my choice of several: but one was too old, another too young; one I fancied had the appearance of fretfulness (a troublesome quality in a companion;) and, with a lady very strongly recommended, I was dissatisfied, because her manners appeared reserved. After these fruitless attempts of my friends to serve me, I

waited so long, that I began to think they took no interest in my concerns; till they once more retrieved their credit, by introducing a person against whom they imagined I could find no reasonable objection: but her manners, too much the reverse of the last candidate, were so frank, open, and unreserved, that I thought it a chance, if, in the superabundance of her loquacity, she did not entertain my neighbours with all my sayings and doings. This troublesome fastidiousness, which I mistook for prudence, I believe arose in part from a solicitude to avoid every thing that might excite afresh my natural irritability; — conscious as I was of the little progress I had made in the virtue of self-command and Christian forbearance, I felt that I could trust myself with no one but a perfect character.

Thus one more winter and a summer passed away; and the approach of another dreary season, to add to the number

of those which had already silvered my head, found me the solitary inmate of the same dwelling: time, however, did not hang so heavily as it had done, nor was sorrow so oppressive, because I had employments and consolations better calculated to alleviate the one, and occupy the other: yet, “in whatever state I was, therewith to be thoroughly content,” was an art which I was far from having yet completely attained; for it had been a fatality ever attending me, to be so continually regretting lost opportunities of happiness, as to neglect those immediately within reach. My distempered imagination was ever pourtraying past seasons, and the individuals connected with them, in the brightest colours; while the recollection of my own misconduct, which should only have been reverted to for future benefit, frequently produced little more than vain regrets, and unprofitable self-reproach.

CHAPTER X. —

THERE was a house on the opposite side of the road, which had long been uninhabited, and, from this circumstance, bore evident marks of decay. The wind had occasioned many apertures in the roof, and the plaster in various places had crumbled down; the clustering vine had forsaken the wall, and trailed on the littered path beneath; the flower beds were overgrown with weeds, and nefarious hands had despoiled the neat white railing which used to enclose them: even the board, announcing "This house to be let; inquire, &c. &c." hung by one nail, and was so reversed, as to be scarcely legible to the inquiring passenger. It was regretted by every body, that a house so pleasantly situated, capable of being made an agreeable, if not an elegant residence, should be left thus as a

disfigurement to the village; for, however a ruined abbey or castle may embellish a scene, it is certain a ruined house can have no such pretensions.

But at length the advertising board was taken down, the shutters thrown open, and the appearance of busy workmen announced an approaching inhabitant. Curiosity was on the alert to obtain information respecting such an important event; but, in the circle of my acquaintance, little could be ascertained, except that it was a widow lady of the name of *Parsons*, who was coming. During the time that the house was under repair, I had occasionally observed an elderly gentleman superintending the workmen, and I wondered who he could be, whether a friend or relation — or whether he, too, was coming to be an inhabitant.

At length I was informed by one of my servants, that a waggon-load of goods had just passed my door: it was unfortunate that I should be a moment too

late at the window, to catch a sight of it; nor could I obtain any accurate information whereby I might judge from the appearance of the furniture, to what sort of a person it belonged; that is to say, whether she was *somebody*, or *nobody*. Shortly, however, her arrival was announced, and I believe I was one of the first to pay my respects to her.

I was ushered into a parlour, too plainly neat to bespeak opulent circumstances; for where an attempt is apparent (and an allowable attempt it is) to supply the place of costly furniture, by skill and contrivance, it usually indicates the moderate means of the contriver. Such was the case in the present instance.

As the old lady was at the further end of the orchard when I called, I had an opportunity of taking a somewhat leisurely survey of the apartment — a species of curiosity which, though I cannot defend it, I believe, *at that time of day*,

was not peculiar to myself. In one corner was a beaufet, with glass folding doors, through which, a fair show of china bowls and basins, ancient jugs and cups, made their motley appearance. One set of these particularly arrested my attention, and excited an indistinct recollection, which I could not immediately trace to its source; but presently the *farm*, and its once loved inhabitants, were as vividly presented to my imagination, as the bright colours of the china were to my eye. I dreaded lest I should be caught in this act of impertinent curiosity; yet I ventured to count the cups; there were eleven! I felt an indescribable sensation of pleasure and pain. Ah! thought I, to whomsoever they now belong, their number would have been complete, but for my girlish imprudence: but a feeble and tottering step in the hall warned me to desist. An aged female entered, stooping and leaning on her crook stick: for a moment I gazed—

I could no longer doubt. "Dear Mrs. Thoroughgood," said I, seizing her hand, "Dear Mrs. Thoroughgood, do you not know me?"

She fixed her eyes inquisitively on my face, and then replied, "No, ma'am, I cannot say that I have the pleasure of knowing you."

"Not know Lucy Burrows!" said I, "have you quite forgotten me, then?"

"And is this Lucy Burrows?" said she: and that sweet expression, which used to animate her countenance in former days, now illumed her aged face. I laid my head on her shoulder, and burst into tears.

"Dear creature," said she, "I have not heard of you for many a day: what can have brought you into this retired place?—are you visiting here?"

"I am no visitor," said I, "but have been an inhabitant of this pleasant village for some years: and it will be pleasanter

than ever, now you are a neighbour. But is not your name Thoroughgood?"

"No," said she, sighing heavily, "my dear Thoroughgood has been dead many years. I was not the person to have married again; but I was left with two girls to provide for, and no one to assist in the farm, for poor George died soon after he left school; and so I once more accepted a worthy man, who proved a father to my children; but he is gone too, and I cannot be long before I follow."

I then made some inquiries respecting her two daughters. She informed me, that Fanny, my little companion in my morning walks, had a family, lived within a few miles of us, and was in prosperous circumstances. That Elizabeth had been less happy in her marriage, and lived in London. "I should have been better off," said she, "that is, I should have been richer, but for that circumstance.

I hardly know what they would have done under their misfortunes, had not her brother —. But they are doing better now, and were well the last time I heard from them."

Having inadvertently introduced a name which she thought might occasion unpleasant recollections, she quickly changed the subject.

"I have had my trials," said she, "like other people; but I have reason to 'sing of mercy, as well as of judgment,' for here I am, after all my wanderings, comfortably settled in the house in which I was born. Every corner of this precious place," looking round with complacency, "reminds me of my youthful days, and of those dear departed parents, who reared me with so much tenderness and care."

I cannot say but that I had some curiosity to learn tidings of her son William; but as she evidently wished to

avoid the subject, I could not introduce it with propriety.

I now experienced a faint renewal of those pleasing sensations which had accompanied the return of my dear brother; perhaps, on the whole, they were more salutary, because less tumultuous; and with a new and unlooked for source of happiness again within my reach, I was almost tempted to make resolutions respecting my conduct during the short time I might reasonably expect to enjoy it. But past bitter experience had at length taught me to suspect myself, and, instead of resolving what I would or would not do, I prayed now for wisdom and strength from above, to guide me equally in prosperity or adversity.

From the society of this venerable Christian I derived both profit and pleasure. By this time, indeed, I might have been an instructor of others; but I had still much to learn, as well as much to

unlearn ; and to her, as a means, along with other valuable friends, I am indebted for the little progress I have made in the Christian life.

I now relinquished my plan of taking a companion ; for I enjoyed all the pleasure and advantage of social intercourse, without incurring the danger of those disputes and altercations, which might have disturbed inmates of the same dwelling. Not that, in such a case, I could have had any thing to apprehend from Mrs. Parsons, although I might justly have distrusted myself ; but, separated as we were by a short walk, our intercourse was the more interesting, and I felt my solitude less oppressive than heretofore, because I could relieve it at pleasure, by the society of one I so cordially loved.

I made one demand on the friendship of Mrs. Parsons, with which she very reluctantly complied : — it was no less, than that she would faithfully tell me of my faults. Perhaps she was not the best

qualified for this important office; for, though by no means deficient in penetration, she was not very expert in discovering the failings of others. I soon, however, contrived to put her friendship in this particular, and her penetration, to the proof.

Mrs. Parsons had known little of her native village since the death of her mother; of course it had undergone considerable revolutions, and none of her old neighbours remained. Having been instructed in the histories of various individuals by their kind neighbours, when I first took up my residence among them, I concluded, that in retailing these anecdotes, I should give as much entertainment to my friend, as I had myself derived from the same source.

“That is a strange family,” said I, “who live in the white house at the corner of the road.”

“What! are they like me,” asked Mrs. Parsons, “newly settled here?”

"No," said I, "I mean that they are very *odd* people: he is a very indifferent husband; but I believe that the fault is not *all* on one side."

"That is seldom the case," replied Mrs. Parsons; "but it is impossible for others to judge of family affairs: perhaps, if we knew all, we might pity them both, rather than blame them."

Undeterred by this rebuff, I went on in the same strain; not, I am sure, from any malignant intention, but from that gossipping habit, which those persons are peculiarly liable to acquire, whose thoughts are not occupied by constant and important engagements, and who, without any determinate motive, repeat all they hear, neither reflecting on the inconsistency of such conduct with the precepts of Christianity, nor of its evil consequences to individuals.

"I would advise you," said I, one day, "to be very careful of what you say to Mrs. Waterhouse, for she is a con-

firmed tattler, and could not keep a secret for her life. I believe she has done a great deal of mischief by her tongue."

"I have few secrets," rejoined Mrs. Parsons, smiling, "and if I had, I should not think of troubling my neighbours with them, unless where I wished to ask their advice."

In this way my good friend endeavoured to check these uncharitable and idle remarks; but such indirect hints were lost upon me, or forgotten. It is a wonder that the early recollection I had of this admirable woman's character, should not have discouraged me from any attempt to entertain *her* at the expense of others.

Once, after observing that a neighbour had failed in business some years ago, and that it was suspected he could scarcely go on now, she exclaimed, "Poor man! how unfortunate some people are!"

"Your pity is rather misplaced in this case," said I; "for it is notorious,

that ill management and extravagance have occasioned all his misfortunes ;" — and then I was proceeding to relate instances of his imprudence, when the good old lady laid her hand gently on mine, saying, " My dear friend, you have requested me to tell you of your faults. Now is it not a fault, and one against which we are plainly warned in the Scriptures, to allow ourselves to judge and speak thus freely of the conduct and character of our neighbours ; and as I am a stranger to the persons of whom you are speaking, why not leave me in ignorance of their failings ?"

" I should not have spoken so freely to any one but yourself," said I.

" To any one but me !" she exclaimed, " and who am I ? I dare say they would not have pitched upon me in particular, to be acquainted with all their affairs and faults ; for they would naturally suppose I had better attend to my own."

" You have no faults," said I, smiling.

“ I will venture to say,” replied she, “ that my neighbours would discover some, were I to live long enough among them. But, my dear Miss Burrows, as you desired me to make so free with you, I believe I shall not have a better opportunity than just now, to mention, that I think *it is* a fault to speak any thing, unnecessarily, to the disadvantage of others. We have only to put ourselves in their places, to feel how we should like such liberties to be taken with our own characters, especially to strangers: that consideration, I think, would set the matter always in a just light.”

I was somewhat disconcerted for the moment; but the sweetness with which this modest reproof was administered, soon tranquillized my feelings, and we spent the remainder of the evening together in uninterrupted harmony.

When alone, I endeavoured to ascertain whether I had been influenced in speaking of others, by any lurking ill-will

or malevolent feeling, and the result of this severe scrutiny, so far as I knew myself, was in my favour ; but, I resolved, in future, to watch against this evil habit so long indulged, and to keep my mouth with a bridle, not only when the wicked were before me, but also in the presence of the righteous ; convinced as I was, that idle detraction is as truly, if not as deeply criminal, as malicious slander, and often equally injurious in its consequences.

In a short time after Mrs. Parsons had become my neighbour, she informed me, with some hesitation, that she expected a visit from her son William, who was now a widower. I cannot say that this intelligence was very agreeable to me : although time, and a succession of painful events, had materially blunted my feelings on that subject, they were not so blunted, but that I was apprehensive of betraying some embarrassment.

•The day arrived which was to bring

the expected guest. I preferred being present at the time of his arrival, to a formal introduction afterwards. He had no sooner alighted at the gate, than I recognized in Mr. Thoroughgood the gentleman whom I had seen in the garden, superintending the workmen. As his mother had informed him of my being a resident in the village, he was not taken by surprise; but he was evidently affected to perceive the change which time and sorrow had made in my appearance. He had undergone a considerable alteration himself; no longer the slender interesting young man of twenty-five, but portly and florid, while his countenance bespoke the same amiable dispositions, matured and chastened by years. His behaviour towards me was free from restraint, cordial and friendly; so that I soon found myself relieved from the unpleasant feelings, which, perhaps, wounded pride had made me anticipate; and in a few hours I felt quite at

my ease in the society of my two old friends.

When Mr. Thoroughgood had adjusted his mother's affairs, he took his leave, and was shortly after succeeded by his sister Fanny, a matronly and superior woman. As she had risen in the scale of society, her manners were more polished than those of her mother. I found her friendship a pleasing acquisition: and her numerous family, who in turns visited their grandmother, did credit to the virtuous stock from whence they sprang.

There was no further need for reserve between Mrs. Parsons and myself, in talking of events long past: and I confess I was desirous to ascertain whether my suspicions were well founded respecting the unfavourable sentiments of this family towards me. She frankly acknowledged, that with her husband I never had been a favourite; while she herself had always indulged the hope of an eventual renovation of my character, imagining

she discerned a good stamina beneath all my numerous failings : — “ but,” she added, “ it was not enough for me that William should unite with one who *might* prove good : it would have been too long for an excellent young man like him to wait for comfort in a wife, till the prime of his days were over ; therefore I acknowledge that I never encouraged the connexion ; and his persisting in it, was the only instance in which he ever disobeyed us.”

Although this excellent woman is now at an advanced age, while I am still allowed to profit by her bright example and edifying conversation, I consider it as the most tranquil and happy period of my life. She keeps but one servant, and her house is, like mine, detached ; yet she neither betrays fear nor anxiety for her personal safety. On my recommending some of the precautions I had used for security, her reply was, “ I would wish to take all prudent care, but I have less

to lose than you have; and, after all, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain :" and then she added, " I will both lay me down and sleep in peace, for it is thou, Lord, who makest me to dwell in safety."

Many amusing, instructive, and interesting anecdotes, she relates of her parents and youthful companions, and of the former inhabitants of the village; but one would imagine it to be the golden age which she is describing, so tender is she of the reputation of the dead as well as of the living: all their amiable qualities she is forward to exhibit; but over their failings she draws a veil; because, as she observes, they cannot now defend themselves.

" And now," said I, " in this happy spot I have begun to live, in the best sense of the word; here, if it is the will of Providence, let me die: here it is that I received my deepest wound, and here also I trust I have been healed: let this

then be the last stage of my pilgrimage." But the sincerity of these petitions was to be put to the trial, although I scarcely imagined that any circumstance could possibly arise likely to alter my plans, or interrupt my settled prospects: yet, nearly forty years after I first received the addresses of William Thoroughgood, they were again renewed! I received from him a sober respectful epistle, professing a sincere and rational friendship, and suggesting, that as his children were all settled in life, and he and I were both alone, whether it might not be for our mutual comfort to unite at last, and spend our few remaining days in each other's society. But I was not at all disposed to afford amusement to my contented and happy neighbours: I was now no more given to change. I am sure there was not a particle of the spirit of retaliation in my refusal; and, however some might blame me, on the principle, that "it is better late than

never," I think I might have been secure of the approbation of all *prudent* wives, widows, and maidens, had I chosen to make the matter public, and boast of my *new conquest*; but this species of vanity had yielded to ambition of a more rational nature; and so I kept my own secret, and no one but my dear Mrs. Parsons could ever boast of being a confident in this my recent *love affair*.

Mr. Thoroughgood received my refusal in the same spirit which had dictated his application; and acknowledged that it might eventually contribute as much to our mutual comfort, possibly more to our reputation, that we should remain as we were.

What striking revolutions are effected on our persons by the lapse of time; and yet what a little difference, if we compare ourselves with each other! When I first entered the farm, a flighty girl, Mrs. Thoroughgood was a sedate woman in the prime of life, and there appeared

almost as much inequality in our persons, as I then apprehended there was in our rank and circumstances: but now the difference appears so inconsiderable, that it seems as if I had almost overtaken her: we are both old ladies — and so far suitable companions for each other; only I am obliged to perceive, by her increasing infirmities, that she has still the start of me. It is a peculiar consolation, however, that I am now able to make some requital for all the important services she has rendered me, by attending her, especially during the occasional absence of her daughter and grandchildren. If I except the anticipations I have of the final result and termination of these my labours of love, I should say, that this state of activity, with the constant interest excited thereby, has a most salutary effect on my temper and feelings.

But I feel that, ere long, I also shall need the same kind offices from my friends: many unequivocal symptoms of

decay announce the solemn truth, that the pins of this tabernacle are gradually loosening. It is not probable that I shall attain to the days of the years of my valued friend. Let me waste no more of these fleeting moments in painful retrospections, or vain regrets ; but, “ forgetting the things which are behind, let me press forward towards those important realities which are before, and all the days of my appointed time wait patiently, till my change come !”

L. B.

CONCLUSION.

HERE ends the manuscript ; the reading of which occupied several evenings at the parsonage, and occasioned various remarks and comments, according to the respective ages or circumstances of the parties present. Mr. Drummond took occasion to make many sage observations on certain parts of the narrative, for the benefit of his youthful auditory ; and his lady significantly observed, that some parts of the story would apply admirably to certain young ladies whom she knew.

My aunt Arabella could never particularly admire William Thoroughgood, and she cordially agreed with Miss Burrows, in the propriety of rejecting his latter addresses.

Miss Harriet professed herself dissatisfied with the story, because it did not end happily.

“ Not end happily ! ” said her father ; “ what do you mean by *ending happily* ? ”

For my part, I think, that where a character is renovated by the genuine influence of Christianity, and where the effects of such a change are conspicuous in the life ; where confirmed evil habits are eradicated, and those of a directly contrary nature implanted in their stead ; — I say, I think a narrative so concluded, does end happily, be the outward circumstances of the individual what they may ; and, I confess, I perceive nothing in the declining days of Miss Burrows to excite regret."

" There is so much death — death — death ! " said Miss Susan, " that it makes one quite low-spirited ! "

" And who, " replied her father, " that has arrived at an advanced age, has not to record the devastating inroads of death — death — death ! According to the usual course of nature, Susan, *your* parents must depart before you ; " — (Susan sighed) ; — " and some one of you must be the lonely survivor of this social group, and have many an affecting tale to tell of the

departure of dear relatives." (Here they all looked tenderly at each other). "But, I trust," resumed the good man, "that there are ~~none~~ here present, who will not meet in the world above, where they shall know no more painful separations, and where death — death — death, shall be swallowed up in victory!"

The old man, mentioned in the commencement of the volume, expired before the narrative was concluded, at the Parsonage. Whether Mr. Drummond pronounced it to be *worth any thing* to his widow, history does not record; — although it is ascertained, that young master Henry gave it as his decided opinion, that "it deserved to be printed."

THE END.

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